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TRAVELLING IN THE AIR.

' Illi robur et ses triplex
Circu pectus erat, qui fragilem truci
Commisit pelago ratem
Primus.' Hon. Od. ill. lib. I.

' Or oak, or brass with triple fold,
Around that mortal's bosom rolled
Who first to the wild ocean's rage
Launched the frail bark.'—Francis.



ORACE was the timidest of sailors, and dedicated an ode to the ship in which his friend Virgil was about to venture upon a voyage which nowadays forms part of a gentleman's summer tour. But if he thought oak and triple brass necessary to the breast of the first sailor, how does his horror rise, in the Ode from which we have quoted, at the daring of the 'expert Dædalus' who first ventured to tempt the void of air *pennis non homini datis*, with wings not to mortals given! Many mythical and mythological stories of flying are told from the olden times. That of Dædalus and Icarus, though it probably had its truth in adventures on another element, has yet sufficient of interest to entitle it to mention.

Dædalus is reported to have been a most ingenious mechanic, and also the inventor of sails for ships. The romantic tradition concerning him is as follows:—Having committed a great crime he fled from Athens to Crete, taking with him his son Icarus. He there constructed for Minos, king of that island, the famous labyrinth with which every one is familiar; but having incurred the king's displeasure, he was himself confined therein. In order to effect his escape, he made wings of feathers and wax, for himself and his son, and with these attempted to fly away; but Icarus soared so high that the sun melted the wax by which his wings were fastened, and he fell into that part of the sea which, by way of testimony, bore his name for hundreds of years afterwards. Dædalus, however, more careful, arrived safely in Sicily.

There is generally some germ of truth as the origin of the most absurd mythological story. Most likely Dædalus and Icarus escaped in a boat,

and the latter fell overboard, which solution, the report that Dædalus invented sails would seem to favour. Uncivilized minds are prone to class things unfamiliar to them with those they know about. Thus the South Sea Islanders conceived the ships of the first discoverers to be gigantic birds; and the late Christopher North, in his fine poem of the 'Isle of Palms,' describing the surprise of a child at the first sight of a ship, makes her say—

'A cloud has fallen from the sky
And is sailing on the sea!'

It is said that Archytas, a clever geometer of Greece, who was lost in a storm on the coast of Calabria, fashioned a dove which made its way through the air for a considerable distance. In more modern times, Müller of Königsberg, thence called Regiomontanus, is recorded to have made a dove on similar principles, which extended its wings, and flew before the Emperor Charles V. when he made a public entry into Nuremberg. This story is very pretty and circumstantial, and only fails in one point—namely, that Regiomontanus died sixty years before Charles made his visit to Nuremberg.

Roger Bacon is the first English philosopher who asserts the existence of a machine for flying; but how much value should be attached to it may be judged from his own words. He says 'not that he himself had seen it, or was acquainted with any person who had done so, but he knew an ingenious person who had contrived one.'

Though men of the highest genius had turned their speculations to the subject of flying, they did not succeed in finding out the means of doing it. After a time a lower class of men, with some smattering of knowledge and much conceit, but little of real ability, appeared on the stage as pretenders to the art of flying. In the sixteenth century a person of this kind visited Scotland, James IV. being at that time king. He introduced himself as a professor of alchemy, and made friends with the needy king by promising to find out for him the philosopher's stone.

This charlatan was appointed by royal favour to an abbacy; but having failed in his promise of producing wealth, he saw the necessity of some new excitement, and therefore made a pair of large wings, with which he undertook to fly from the walls of Stirling Castle. As he had probably played his game out, and become desperate, he actually put his foolhardy scheme into practice; but those of our readers who know the situation of Stirling Castle will not be surprised to hear that he broke his thigh in his consequent fall to the ground. The quibbling and sophistical logic of the age, aided by his own cool impudence, sufficed to excuse him from the contempt he deserved. 'My wings,' said he, 'were composed of various feathers, among them were those of dunghill fowls, and they, by a certain sympathy, were attracted to the dunghill; whereas had my wings been made of the feathers of eagles, the same sympathy would have attracted them to the regions of air.'

There were, during the two succeeding centuries, many attempts to fly; all of them, of course, ending in failure, and many terminating tragically. In 1617, Fleider, rector of the school at Tubingen, lectured on the art of flying, but he wisely refrained from attempting to put his theories into practice; however, an unhappy monk tried to do so, but fell down, and, breaking both his legs, perished a miserable victim to a stupid experiment.

About 1680 it was demonstrated by Borelli, by means of numerous comparative experiments on the pectoral muscles of men and birds, that it is absolutely impossible to find adequate force in the human muscles to perform the act of flying, even if wings could be attached. Before this, however, men of genius had, in retirement, evidently hit upon the principles of the balloon, although it was to be so many centuries before the idea should be perfected. Albert, of Saxony, although his assumptions are erroneous and fanciful, yet foreshadowed the principles of the modern balloon. He assumes that essential fire (what-

ever that may be) is lighter than air, and floats above the region of our atmosphere; and so conceived the idea of enclosing a portion of this ethereal substance in a light hollow globe, which he imagined might be raised in this manner to a certain height, and there kept floating, while, by an infusion of the grosser fluid, it could be made to descend at pleasure.

How anxiously would Albert speculate upon the means of procuring this 'ethereal fluid,' which he was convinced would raise his hollow globe, if only he could have obtained a supply! Had he known of the light gases, doubtless the discovery of aerial navigation would have been precipitated by three or four hundred years. In most instances, indeed, the person who obtains the credit of discovery is merely the one who puts the top spoke in the ladder by which the special truth is reached—the said ladder having been built up laboriously by other men, without whose exertions the last operator would never have been able to attain the place where his efforts would have a chance of success.

Mendoza and Schott, Jesuits, of Portugal and Germany respectively, took up the speculations of Albert nearly two hundred and fifty years later. The latter sighed for some supernatural power to bring down the 'ethereal essence' which he wanted. Father Laurus supposed the early morning dew to be the condensation of this essence, which had fallen in the night; and put forth many equally absurd propositions, which indicated the extreme shallowness of the knowledge of men at that time, who pretended to learning, and who indeed were learned according to their day and generation.

Cardan, soon after this, and later still Fabry, proposed the use of fire, but they appear to have confined themselves entirely to speculation.

About 1645, Cyrano de Bergerac, an accomplished man in every branch of knowledge, wrote a satirical book, which he calls 'The Comical History of the States and Kingdoms of the Sun and Moon,' which we can only

allude to here as containing a mass of witty exposure of fallacies, and clever suggestions of truths, and which, no doubt, gave to our own Swift the idea of 'Gulliver's Travels.'

John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester (ob. 1672), who was very clever as a mechanician, maintains, in a pamphlet, 'Concerning the New World,' that it would be possible to make a journey to the moon if he could be conveyed for a starting-point to some place beyond the reach of the earth's attraction. These 'ifs,' indeed, are the bugbears of speculators in scientific as in other matters. 'If,' said Archimedes, 'I had whereon to stand, I would move the world;' and 'If,' said Bishop Wilkins, 'you will cause the suspension of an imperative and necessary law of nature, I will go to the moon.'

Francis Lana (c. 1660), a Jesuit, proposed to make hollow spheres of copper, which being exhausted of air, would float in our ordinary atmosphere; but every tyro in natural philosophy at the present day will at once see the utter absurdity of the scheme.

A vacuum, then, or some hypothetical æther, seems to have been the only means of ascension which suggested themselves to men up to this time; and ballooning then seemed to be in a fair way of dying in the protracted throes of birth, for the practical experimenters do not seem to have encouraged the idea of employing fire, though we have seen that it was suggested theoretically by some before this time.

The first persons who tested their aerial theories by actual demonstration, and showed by this best of all proofs the possibility of men rising into the air, were the Montgolfiers, paper-manufacturers of Annonay, a town not far from Lyons.

It is singular that the idea which led them to a successful elucidation of their problem should have been rather of a poetical than a practical kind. They observed that smoke and clouds ascended into the air, and thought, by forming an artificial smoky cloud in the interior of some light receptacle, to insure the rising of the vessel in the air. They

fancied they could supply the place of the air inside their machine with smoke, which was to be the rising power. However erroneous was this notion in conception, it led to a right practical result—not, however, by supplying the place of the contained air with smoke, but by rarefying that air by the action of heat.

The first balloon they made was in the form of a parallelopiped. This machine was of the capacity of about forty feet; and there was an opening in the lower part in which was inserted or suspended some burning material, the heat of which rarefied the air inside, and caused the balloon to ascend in the manner now so familiar to every one.

The Montgolfiers, encouraged by the success of their first experiment, proceeded to enlarge the capacity of their trial machines. In 1783 they made one of spherical shape, 35 feet in diameter, and containing 23,000 feet. It was capable of raising 500 pounds.

We have here an instance of the numerous minor difficulties which attend inventors: instead of the sponge saturated with inflammable oil or spirit of our times, they effected their purpose by the combustion of a mixture of chopped straw and wool, the latter ingredient seeming to show that the idea of the cloud was not yet eradicated from the minds of the inventors. This, the first real balloon ascent, was most successful. The bag rose 6000 feet above the surface of the earth, and, after a time, fell nearly a mile and a half from the point of its departure.

Stephen Montgolfier made several experiments under the auspices of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris, each time constructing a larger balloon, and achieving a more successful ascent. The inhabitants of Annonay still celebrate the memory of their distinguished townsmen by an annual fête, an indispensable feature of which is the ascent of a huge Montgolfière.

When these marvels were attracting the attention of all the French world, a noted chemist named Pilatre du Rosier first made his appearance as an experimenter in

this science, attracted thereto by the success of the Montgolfiers. He was the first to attempt an actual ascent himself, though on several prior occasions small animals had been despatched to the azure. M. Pilatre du Rosier attached himself to a balloon much larger than any before constructed (viz. 74 x 48 feet); and after several experiments while the balloon was confined by ropes, at last ventured to cast himself off from earth, and commence an aerial voyage. This was a very encouraging trial. He ascended to a height of about 3000 feet, and came down at the distance of five miles from the spot whence he rose.

We must leave M. Pilatre du Rosier for the present, but shall have to renew his acquaintance under melancholy circumstances; meanwhile we shall conclude this account of air-inflated balloons with a short description of the largest one of which we have any account. This monster was made at Lyons, 1784. It was 130 feet high, and 105 in diameter, while it would hold 540,000 feet of rarefied air. Its lifting power is stated at six men and 3200 pounds of ballast. On 19th January, 1784, having only taken seventeen minutes in preparation, it ascended with seven persons in the car. After attaining an elevation of something more than 3000 feet, a sudden rent of about 50 feet in extent brought the machine and party quickly to the ground, but happily without injury to any one.

In the succeeding month the 'European Magazine' says that eighteen persons ascended from Naples; and in Cunningham's Cyclopædia it is stated that in 1784 fifteen persons went up by a large balloon at Rouen, and in the same year Lunardi made his first ascent in London. This therefore brings us to the consideration of gas-inflated balloons.

Hydrogen gas had long been known; but its nature and peculiar qualities were, to a great extent, unknown, especially its weight, as compared with common air. Mr. Henry Cavendish having occasion to experiment upon it about the year

1766, found that its weight was only about one-seventh part of that of an equal bulk of atmospheric air. So apparent a method of obtaining the lifting power for balloons did not, of course, escape the attention of aerial philosophers. Dr. Black, about 1763, made some suggestions as to its employment; and Mr. Tiberius Cavallo (name of terrible import!) actually succeeded in elevating, by means of hydrogen gas, some soap bubbles!

The Messrs. Roberts and Professor Charles were the first to make an actual ascent in a balloon inflated with this gas. Several experiments with small balloons by themselves and the Count Zambeccari were so successful as to induce them to trust themselves to a larger one of the same kind.

Accordingly one was made about 27 feet in diameter, and possessing raising power sufficient for two persons, with the necessary ballast. On this occasion we find the first use of the valve, for the escape of gas in the elevated regions to which they aspired to ascend, by which they guarded against danger from explosion. On the 1st December, 1783, one of the Robertses and Professor Charles made an ascent from Paris in this balloon: they only attained, it is said, the height of 600 feet, and came down at the distance of 27 miles, an hour and three-quarters having been occupied in the transit. Mr. Roberts having left the car, his companion thought he would have a solitary cruise, and so set out: he found himself, after about 20 minutes, at an elevation of 9,000 feet from the earth. The *aéronaut* suffered, on this occasion, very much from cold, and found the expansion of the gas so great that he had to congratulate himself on having provided a valve for its liberation, otherwise doubtless an explosion would have caused the destruction of the balloon and the precipitate descent of the *aéronaut* from his fearful elevation. The extreme height attained was 10,500 feet.

M. Blanchard made an ascent in 1784, when he tried some contrivances for steering: these con-

sisted of a rudder and two wings. He found them, however, of no use either in this or subsequent ascents; although MM. Morveau and Bertrand reported the same year that they found a similar apparatus to exert a very perceptible influence. The Messrs. Roberts also reported that they found oars useful in a calm, inasmuch as by their aid the balloon described the segment of an ellipse, whose shortest diameter was 6000 feet. On this journey they accomplished a distance of 150 miles in six hours and a half. In July, 1784, they made another ascent, in which the Duke of Orleans took part. This was a very perilous affair; for, getting into a region of hurricanes, the balloon became so distended as to be in danger of bursting, and they were obliged to rend the silk in two or three places, and thus at great risk reached the ground again.

Two plans were now proposed for economizing gas and ballast by the use of compound balloons; the first plan was to have a bag of atmospheric air within the balloon, to be acted upon by means of bellows. The Duc de Chartres was the first who experimented under these conditions; but the unfavourable state of the elements prevented the invention from being fairly tried, and the duke had a narrow escape of his life.

The second plan for a compound balloon was to have an upper one of gas and a lower one of rarefied air. It was supposed that, by the application of fire to the lower machine, which acted as ballast to the upper one, its weight would be diminished and the whole affair would ascend, while a tendency downwards would be produced by merely letting the fire die out, when the air inside the lower balloon would gradually cool and resume its original density, or be supplemented by an influx of the surrounding atmosphere. Pilatre du Rosier, whom we have seen to have been a daring adventurer in the realms of air, with a companion, M. Romaine, anxious to return a visit which had been paid to France by Dr. Jeffreys and M. Blanchard, started, in a machine

of this construction, from Boulogne, 15th June, 1785, with the intention of crossing the English Channel. Their ascent was made without accident, and everything seemed to promise a favourable termination to the adventure; but before long the spectators noticed the upper balloon to swell considerably, and the aeronauts to be in some confusion, as if trying to bring the valve into action. Shortly afterwards, at an altitude, as is conjectured, of about a mile from the ground, the lower balloon caught fire. Whether the fire communicated itself to the upper one cannot be known, for both the ill-fated aeronauts were killed. No explosion was heard, but the upper balloon collapsed soon after, and came down with terrific rapidity with its unlucky passengers. Pilâtre du Rosier was dead when taken up; M. Romaine lived a short time after, but was unable to give any account of the disastrous transaction.

A remarkable voyage was made soon after this time by M. Testu: his balloon was made of tiffany, and was supplied with oars or wings. He started from Paris in the early evening, and after attaining a height of 2500 feet, to avoid the waste of gas, he endeavoured to use the wings for the purpose of descent: he found them, however, of little use, and only after a considerable period came to the earth. Here he was surrounded by the occupier of the field and his labourers, who demanded payment for damage, and in default took him prisoner, drawing the balloon along by ropes. The oars having been broken off, and his mantle taken from him, he found the buoyancy of his machine so much increased that he ventured to cut the ropes by which he was held prisoner, and left the surly country people to their own disappointment. He reascended to some considerable height, when, hearing the 'horn of chase,' he pulled his valve, and came near the ground. A huntsman rode up, and M. Testu, fearing, perhaps, a repetition of the farmer's incivility, threw out some ballast, and ascended for the third time. It was now night, when, having passed through some dense

clouds, he came into a region of storms, and spent several hours in the midst of the most terrific thunder and lightning. He accomplished his descent about four o'clock in the morning, having been aloft twelve hours and travelled sixty-three miles.

Let us now, again retracing our steps a little, see how matters went on in England.

The first balloon ascent in London was from the Artillery Ground, and was launched by Count Zambeccari. It was filled with hydrogen gas, and was ten feet in diameter.

Mr. Tytler of Edinburgh ascended from that city on the 27th August, 1784; and Vincent Lunardi, an Italian, made the first personal ascent in England on the 15th September, 1784. His balloon had no valve, the gas being discharged, by pressure, from the neck, which was left open. This ascent was also made from the Artillery Ground, and Lunardi took with him two or three small animals. After a two hours' voyage he descended near Ware. Lunardi made many interesting ascents in Scotland, which he described in a series of letters published in 1785.

The next was made by M. Blanchard and Professor Shelden. The latter was landed fourteen miles from Chelsea, whence they started, but M. Blanchard reascended, and made his final descent near Rumsey in Hampshire, a distance of seventy-five miles.

Sadler, of whom more anon, made his first ascent from Oxford in 1784, and in the ensuing winter M. Blanchard and Dr. Jeffreys crossed the Straits of Dover. The point of departure was the top of Shakespeare's Cliff. Owing to some deficiency of gas it was found that the balloon was scarcely equal to the task of carrying two men, so that nearly all the ballast had to be thrown away before starting. They rose gently, and proceeded slowly on account of the lightness of the winds; and, soon after starting, had the horrid conviction forced upon them that they were descending. They directly threw out half their ballast; but as that did not check their descent the

rest followed, together with some books, by which for a time the balloon was relieved, and they began to ascend. When nearly across the Channel they again approached too near to be pleasant to the surface, and were obliged to part with the remainder of their books and every ponderous article that could be dispensed with. This proved scarcely enough; and they made preparations for cutting away the boat or car, having previously made themselves fast to the net-work by slings. This last resort, however, was unnecessary, for when the balloon felt the land breezes she began again to ascend, and they finally came to the ground in the forest of Guignes. M. Blanchard received from the King of France a gift of 12,000 livres and an annuity of 1,200.

M. Blanchard was the inventor of the parachute; and in the course of a journey of 300 miles from Lisle, he sent down a dog by means of one of these instruments, and the innocent victim of the experiment reached the ground in safety. Garnerin improved on the parachute, and often used it, both in the way Blanchard had done and by descending himself. On one occasion he went up from North Audley Street; and when at such a height as scarcely to be distinguishable in the car, he left it, attached to the parachute. The machine came to grief in some way, and so did M. Garnerin. He fell in a field at St. Pancras, and was severely cut and bruised by the fall (1802.)

In the next year we have an account of the first ascent made ostensibly for scientific purposes independent of the science of aërostation itself. This was undertaken by MM. Robertson and Schoest, from Hamburg; and was succeeded by observations atmospheric and magnetic by Mr. Robertson and another coadjutor, M. Sacharof. This kind of inquiry was pursued with greater results by Gay-Lussac and his assistants, who prepared a great number of data for inquirers into those subjects. They also made many interesting experiments and observations in electricity. During his ascents Lussac attained a much

greater elevation than any of his predecessors. In one the barometer marked only 12.95 inches, which he calculated to indicate a height of nearly four and a half miles.

In 1806 M. Mesment fell out of his car near Lisle, and was dashed to pieces.

A proposal about this time by a German to facilitate walking by attaching a balloon to the head of a man, yet not sufficiently powerful to raise him from the ground, produced the following epigram:—

The Frenchman, volatile and light,
Aspires to wing the air in flight,
The German, heavy and profound,
With nimble feet would trip the ground.
Philosophers! do what you will;
But—*Nature will be Nature still.*

The widow of Marshal Villeron, in her 80th year, was incredulous, but when she saw an ascent, exclaimed, 'There can be no doubt about it: the secret of living for ever will be found out when I shall be dead.' The prince, who was afterwards Louis XVIII., made the following impromptu on seeing an ascent:—

Les Anglais, nation trop fière
S'arrogent l'empire des mers,
Les Français, nation légère,
S'emparent de celui des airs.

In 1807 Garnerin continued his ascents in France—on one occasion travelling 45 leagues in seven hours, and on another 300 miles in about the same time. This speed was much exceeded in one of his excursions from London. He made the distance thence to Colchester, sixty miles, in three-quarters of an hour.

Sadler in 1813 attempted to cross from Dublin to England, and commenced his voyage under favourable auspices. In three hours he approached very near to the Welsh coast, but a change of wind drove him off. Fearful of the consequences, he descended into the sea in the neighbourhood of some ships that were beating down Channel, but was mortified and disgusted to find that no notice was taken of his perilous position. Having got rid of his ballast, he was fortunately able to rise again, and after some time to espay some other ships; but

when he again descended to the surface he found the wind so strong and his motion so rapid that none of the ships could overtake him. He at last checked the rapidity of his motion by letting out a considerable quantity of gas.

When he was overtaken the sailors were afraid to go near him, for fear of being entangled in the netting; but Sadler's fertile imagination, sharpened by the peril of his situation, suggested to them the plan of running the balloon through with their bowsprit, and at the same time throwing him a rope, by which he was hauled on board. An account of somewhat similar adventures by a Mr. Crosbie, from Dublin, occurs about the same time.

Lieut. Harris ascended from the 'Eagle Tavern' in 1824, accompanied by a lady. He had two valves: the cord of the larger one was incautiously fastened to the hoop, so that when the balloon elongated after expansion the line tightened, permitting a considerable escape of gas. The aéronaut, quite ignorant of the real cause of the mishap, fancied the silk had rent near the top, and seems to have been able to do nothing to avert the impending catastrophe. The balloon was precipitated with such force to the earth that Harris was killed on the spot; the young woman, however, afterwards recovered.

Aéronauts were now busy all over the world; but we can do no more than mention the names of Major Money, Zambecari, and Baldwin, who did good service in the early times of ballooning (1785, *et seq.*); Hampton, Cocking, Captain Lowden, Gale, Gypson, and a host of other adventurers in the regions of air. Even our notice of the veteran Green must be confined to his voyage to Nassau, in company with Messrs. Robert Holland and Monk Mason. This remarkable adventure took effect in 1836 from Vauxhall Gardens. Great preparations had been made to perform such a journey as had never before been; provisions and ballast sufficient for any emergency had been got together, with passports directed to all parts of the Continent; guide-ropes,

which were intended to trail on the ground, and fix the distance from the surface, were provided, with hollow floats of copper to be used at sea. The travellers having started in the afternoon, took an easterly direction, and passed directly over Canterbury, then crossing the sea, Belgium, and the Rhine, finally descended at dawn of day the next morning at Nassau, whence the balloon was afterwards named. The drag and guide-ropes did not answer the expectations formed of them; and indeed none but enthusiasts would dream of dragging ropes over the surface of the earth to the danger and discomfort of the people dwelling thereon.

Mr. Green, during many years of his public life, was the friendly rival of Mr. Henry Coxwell, who is the aéronaut, *par excellence*, of our times, and by far the most ready and experienced manager of a balloon that the world has yet seen. For many years—we believe indeed during his whole life—he has been engaged, though not exclusively, in this and cognate pursuits.

This gentleman is a member of an old county family resident at Ablington House, Gloucestershire, in constant succession since the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth.

The aéronaut is the youngest son of the late Captain Coxwell, R.N., and was himself intended for the military service, but disappointed of the requisite influence by the untimely death of his father. He had achieved a continental reputation as an aéronaut many years ago. We have now before us an immense batch of German literature occupied chiefly with descriptions of his ascents. In Prussia he has on several occasions experimented with his war-balloon to the wonder and gratification of the members of the government who employed him. He has frequently, also, been in communication with our own government; but without inducing them to take much interest in the matter.

Mr. Coxwell has made very nearly five hundred ascents. We must content ourselves with noticing only a very few. Perhaps the most re-

markable, on many accounts, is that in which he accompanied Mr. Gypson, Mr. Albert Smith, and Mr. Pridmore, 6th July, 1847. The ascent was made with Mr. Gypson's balloon from Vauxhall; and at a considerable elevation a display of fireworks took place from the car, immediately after which a tremendous storm arose, of which Mr. Coxwell writes:—

‘Grand as our fireworks appeared, we were presently called upon to behold a scene that was more awfully grand and impressive. As if to show the puny effects of man's most skilful methods of displaying fireworks, indignant nature blazed forth one immense sheet of lightning,’

which extended far throughout the regions of space. The storm passed over quickly, and all was fair again; but soon after, from some cause still unexplained, a rent occurred near the top of the balloon, which immediately collapsed, and began to descend with frightful rapidity. With admirable presence of mind Mr. Coxwell with his knife liberated the neck of the balloon, which, ascending towards the crown, allowed the machine to assume the form of a parachute. This precaution proved successful, for although they came to the ground with terrific violence, none of the aeronauts sustained serious injury.

Another remarkable voyage of Mr. Coxwell's was commenced, 16th June, 1857, at North Woolwich, and terminated near Tavistock, the distance (nearly 250 miles) having been performed in five hours, or considerably less than the time occupied by the express railway-trains. Recently Mr. Coxwell, in company with Colonel McDonald and several officers of the Rifle Brigade, travelled from Winchester Barracks to Harrow (nearly seventy miles) in one hour and six minutes.

Of the ascents made last and continued this year for meteorological observations, many papers have lately appeared; ours confines itself more to the history of balloons, and especially are we interested in the Mammoth balloon and its clever contriver, Mr. Coxwell, the intrepid manager of those ascents. The last ascent of the past year's series

took place at Wolverhampton on the 5th September. Mr. Glaisher's testimony to the ability of the aeronaut is hearty and enthusiastic. He expressly says that the power of taking observations at a great height depends absolutely on the skill of the conductor of the balloon. He congratulates the Association on having secured the services of Mr. Coxwell, who has made 480 ascents, has great scientific knowledge, and knows the ‘why’ and the ‘because’ of all his operations.

They reached on this occasion to a height of over six miles, and sufficiently ascertained that this was almost the limit to which the endurance of man's physical capacity can carry him. For some time before that height had been reached Mr. Glaisher had been unable to record his observations, and had become insensible, while Mr. Coxwell was somewhat overcome by the effects of the rare atmosphere in which they were moving; indeed, when he at last became convinced that he had gone as high as was consistent with prudence, and endeavoured to reach the connecting cord to open the valve, he found his hands black and benumbed so as to be utterly powerless; and here Mr. Coxwell's never-failing presence of mind availed them in the last extremity, for, seizing the cord with his teeth, he opened the valve, and as a consequence they were soon speeding towards the lower regions. What might have been the result if Mr. Coxwell's teeth had failed him as well as his hands is too horrible for conjecture. The two daring aerial sailors might have died, while their ship traversed the vast realms of space, like Coleridge's spectre-ship or the ‘Flying Dutchman.’ It is just possible that it might have continued its weird voyage for years in those quiet realms where the action of the elements for the effects of decay in either organic or inorganic substances we suppose to be almost inappreciable.

We are all familiar with Nadar's recent perilous ascent in the ‘Giant’ balloon, which he seems to think destined to solve the aerial problem.

HERBERT FREER'S PERPLEXITIES;

A Tale Story for Christmas.

IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

A LUCKY YOUNG DOG.

WHEN Herbert Freer first settled in Severnsbury he would have seemed to you, or indeed to any one, about the most unlikely man in England to have furnished such a title as that which I have prefixed to the story I have to tell.

Perplexities indeed! How should he have any? A young fellow of thirty, he had come down there to manage the Severnsbury branch of the Metropolitan and District Banking Company. He had a salary of six hundred a year, which, as everybody knows, is double the income on which (it has been conceded by the 'Times,') a man may lawfully marry. Nay, besides this he had, it was known, some interest as partner in the bank itself. His interest, he said, was merely that which Lazarus had in the dinner of Dives. He was allowed to pocket now and then a sovereign which could not be conveniently crammed into the bags of the chairman and directors; but his own profits in that way were altogether contingent on the success of the exertions of himself and his brother managers to earn more money than these bags could be made to hold. So talked Herbert Freer of himself. But then a young fellow who is doing well in the world is apt to speak banteringly of his income. We know that there are houses where even the post of Lazarus would be sought by many candidates. And everybody in Severnsbury knew that the Metropolitan and District Bank was one of those good things in which a share is not to be had by outsiders at any price, and in which a share, being once had, is not lightly surrendered. Then, too, it was known that Herbert's father had died in very comfortable circumstances, and that Herbert had inherited all.

Probably gossip was therefore not far wrong in setting down the young manager's income at something like fifteen hundred a year, and in assuming that (though six hundred a year is surely worth looking after) he filled his official post not so much because of the income it gave him as because it gave him something, without giving him over-much, to do. At the same time it was granted that he did his work in no mere spirit of dilettantism. He had the reputation of being a thoroughly good man of business—not easily over-reached, and yet not over-reaching. Much as his clerks liked him they respected him more. Add to these advantages that he had a frank and winning way, a good temper, good health, and a handsome person, and we may well ask what more need he wish that Fortune should do for him.

Herbert Freer, in short, was declared by everybody to be 'a very lucky young dog;' and, what was more to his credit (and is not invariably the fact with lucky young dogs as a species), he was admitted by most people to deserve his luck.

Yet, for all this, we shall see in the sequel that it was not in any serene heaven of his own that he lived;—that he had to breathe the common, perturbed air like the rest of us;—had his anxieties as we have ours, and walked out often with black care for an attendant;—had to wrestle hard with doubts and indecisions;—knew how hard is the pillow to which sleep will not come;—often 'heard the chimes at midnight' while he tried in vain to balance conscience with expediency;—in a word, that he too was taken prisoner by the horrid sphinx who tries us all with the riddles that we have to answer on peril of our lives,

and was well-nigh drowned in perplexities, as, indeed, too many of us are in this most perplexing world.

Moreover, if a young lady's opinion be of weight, it is undeniable that in Severnside there were many estimable young ladies who would have been ready to declare that for a man like Herbert Freer to remain unmarried as he did was nothing less than a clear tempting of Providence, a clear laying of himself open to all manner of troubles and perplexities from which they themselves would, any of them, have undertaken to guard him. For Herbert, it must be admitted, brought with him the reputation of being of a disposition, in matters amatory, vexatious both to mammas and daughters; and it soon appeared that he really deserved this reputation. No angler of course expects to land a salmon as easily as a gudgeon. But allowing that a good fish is worth some little trouble, and indeed has a right to decline to be caught without giving trouble, yet even the most patient of anglers, of mammas, of daughters, may be provoked and wearied out sometimes; and Herbert, it was complained, would neither take a bait nor leave it alone. No one was more ready than he to join the girls in their pic-nics—to row them on the river—to walk with them—to talk with them—to read poetry to them—even to write verses for them—to dance with them—to take them to concerts and lectures—in short, to be their assiduous dangler in any of the thousand and one capacities in which dangles are so useful. But what avail pic-nics and boatings, moonlight walkings and moony talkings, if they are to be merely their own reward? Ladies of practical habits, alive to the stern realities of milliners' bills and unmarried angels, look on these trivial gallantries as only the necessary preliminaries to more important negotiations. To persist in them too long is a mere 'tarrying in the letter that killeth' deeply cherished hopes. And somehow these charming junketings, no matter how dexterously contrived or how often repeated, did not bring about that softening of

the heart, or softening of the brain (I am really not quite clear which is the most correct expression), without which even the best-nurtured young men continue strangely obdurate to those tender impressions which are so beautiful on materials of the due plasticity. Herbert, in short, obstinately delayed to 'range' himself. As Napoleon, or some other general, complained of English soldiers that they were by nature so obtuse and thick-headed that when, according to all known rules of war they had been fairly beaten they could not understand it, but out of sheer ignorance and stupidity went on fighting—so an accusation of precisely the opposite nature might with justice have been brought against the young gentleman now under criticism. His fair foes surrendered to him at discretion, laid down their arms, and craved only to preserve life at the sacrifice of liberty: yet he was so dull he would not understand that they had surrendered at all. He went on still in the trivial warfare of an everyday flirtation, and failed to see that serious opposition was no longer offered to him. As for marching home in triumph with a trembling prisoner in chains behind him, as a gallant young conqueror here ought to march—this was what Herbert Freer could by no means be induced to do.

To drop the fighting metaphor, as this is to be quite a peaceful story—out of his excessive goodness—out of his obliging disposition—out of his amiability, his friendliness, his general *bonhomie*, there had grown a belief that these very qualities were what prevented and would prevent him from ever seriously falling in love. It was argued (not certainly by very profound logicians) that a young man who was politeness itself would shrink from doing so uncivil a thing as to pass by and give the cut direct to all the young ladies of Severnside save one. Again and again it had been announced by the established gossip that he was engaged to and about to marry the eldest Miss Fetherbow, the youngest Miss Fetherbow, the second Miss Fether-

few, Miss Bertha Peacock, Miss Woodley (niece to old Colonel Woodley)—nay, he had even been talked about in connection with the venerable Miss Phillips herself (whose age was guessed to be about a thousand, and whose money in the funds about a million). But he only let this talk ebb and flow at its own sweet will. When its ripples dashed right up against him sometimes, he skipped out of the way of them; sometimes he met the small deluge with a laugh and a joke. As for a serious denial or a serious confirmation he was too wise to give it. For he knew, as we all know, that in all such gossip the word of the supposed principal in matrimonial arrangements is the last word that is believed. So rumour went on prophesying, and he contented himself with simply letting the prophecies remain unfulfilled. Such had been the state of affairs for nearly two years; and Severnsbury had at last become quite incredulous. A settled conviction had grown up in the minds of Herbert's acquaintance that he had not in him the stuff of which a lover is made. For a lover must have his heats and impetuosities, his eagerness, his strokes (it may be almost admitted) of sharp practice against rivals; and Herbert had shown so far none of these qualities. He had exhibited himself only in the character of an easy, good-tempered, clever, and rather careless fellow. When, therefore, it was blown about by old Mrs. Fetherfew that she was *sure* he was 'very sweet on Miss Foster,' and that she (Mrs. Fetherfew) was *quite* sure there really was 'something in it' this time, Severnsbury only shook his wise head and declined to have its credulity imposed on any more. Mrs. Fetherfew talked, as the winds of heaven blow, just as she listed; but it was said that if she talked as freely as the winds she also talked as idly; and so it came about that she was just as little regarded as they.

CHAPTER II.

'LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE.'

Herbert's acquaintance with the Fosters was not more than a month

old when this latest gossip first began to gain ground; and in order that we may see how far it had really any foundation—how far it merely resembled the many other idle rumours that had gone before it—we shall go back to the beginning of this acquaintance.

Of course when Herbert first came to Severnsbury he came well provided with letters of introduction. And even had he not done so, and had the repute of fifteen hundred a year not been in itself a tolerably good introduction, he would not have been long without acquaintances. Amongst other notes, he had brought one to Captain Foster; but he had kept it unrepresented so long that at last he had become ashamed to present it at all, and so he had, instead of doing so, simply put it in the fire. He had, indeed, met the captain once or twice at other people's houses, and so had come to be on speaking terms with him; but the acquaintance had never become more than a casual one. Wandering, however, one evening down the terrace in which the captain lived, he noticed at the door of his house the figure of a young man, who pulled the bell with, apparently, some little hesitation, stooped down after having done so as if to listen whether it had rung or not, and, seemingly having satisfied himself that it had *not*, descended the steps, and was walking off briskly with that relieved expression of countenance which a man wears when he has suddenly decided to put off a call which he is not over-anxious to make; but in turning to walk off he turned face to face with Herbert.

'Do you often do that, Phil? Are you ringing at *all* the doors and running away, or merely taking them in a casual way?'

The runaway was one of Herbert's most intimate companions, by name Philip Grey.

'Oh! confound it!' he said, 'I have pulled two or three times, and either it doesn't ring or they have seen me through the window and don't care to answer it. Besides the captain is such a bore I am glad to have an excuse for going away.'

Herbert laughed. 'Then let us

when he again descended to the surface he found the wind so strong and his motion so rapid that none of the ships could overtake him. He at last checked the rapidity of his motion by letting out a considerable quantity of gas.

When he was overtaken the sailors were afraid to go near him, for fear of being entangled in the netting; but Sadler's fertile imagination, sharpened by the peril of his situation, suggested to them the plan of running the balloon through with their bowsprit, and at the same time throwing him a rope, by which he was hauled on board. An account of somewhat similar adventures by a Mr. Crosbie, from Dublin, occurs about the same time.

Lieut. Harris ascended from the 'Eagle Tavern' in 1824, accompanied by a lady. He had two valves: the cord of the larger one was incautiously fastened to the hoop, so that when the balloon elongated after expansion the line tightened, permitting a considerable escape of gas. The aeronaut, quite ignorant of the real cause of the mishap, fancied the silk had rent near the top, and seems to have been able to do nothing to avert the impending catastrophe. The balloon was precipitated with such force to the earth that Harris was killed on the spot; the young woman, however, afterwards recovered.

Aéronauts were now busy all over the world; but we can do no more than mention the names of Major Money, Zambeccari, and Baldwin, who did good service in the early times of ballooning (1785, *et seq.*); Hampton, Cocking, Captain Lowden, Gale, Gypson, and a host of other adventurers in the regions of air. Even our notice of the veteran Green must be confined to his voyage to Nassau, in company with Messrs. Robert Hollond and Monck Mason. This remarkable adventure took effect in 1836 from Vauxhall Gardens. Great preparations had been made to perform such a journey as had never before been; provisions and ballast sufficient for any emergency had been got together, with passports directed to all parts of the Continent; guide-ropes,

which were intended to trail on the ground, and fix the distance from the surface, were provided, with hollow floats of copper to be used at sea. The travellers having started in the afternoon, took an easterly direction, and passed directly over Canterbury, then crossing the sea, Belgium, and the Rhine, finally descended at dawn of day the next morning at Nassau, whence the balloon was afterwards named. The drag and guide-ropes did not answer the expectations formed of them; and indeed none but enthusiasts would dream of dragging ropes over the surface of the earth to the danger and discomfort of the people dwelling thereon.

Mr. Green, during many years of his public life, was the friendly rival of Mr. Henry Coxwell, who is the aeronaut, *par excellence*, of our times, and by far the most ready and experienced manager of a balloon that the world has yet seen. For many years—we believe indeed during his whole life—he has been engaged, though not exclusively, in this and cognate pursuits.

This gentleman is a member of an old county family resident at Abington House, Gloucestershire, in constant succession since the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth.

The aeronaut is the youngest son of the late Captain Coxwell, R.N., and was himself intended for the military service, but disappointed of the requisite influence by the untimely death of his father. He had achieved a continental reputation as an aeronaut many years ago. We have now before us an immense batch of German literature occupied chiefly with descriptions of his ascents. In Prussia he has on several occasions experimented with his war-balloon to the wonder and gratification of the members of the government who employed him. He has frequently, also, been in communication with our own government; but without inducing them to take much interest in the matter.

Mr. Coxwell has made very nearly five hundred ascents. We must content ourselves with noticing only a very few. Perhaps the most re-

markable, on many accounts, is that in which he accompanied Mr. Gypson, Mr. Albert Smith, and Mr. Pridmore, 6th July, 1847. The ascent was made with Mr. Gypson's balloon from Vauxhall; and at a considerable elevation a display of fireworks took place from the car, immediately after which a tremendous storm arose, of which Mr. Coxwell writes:—

'Grand as our fireworks appeared, we were presently called upon to behold a scene that was more awfully grand and impressive. As if to show the puny effects of man's most skilful methods of displaying fireworks, indignant nature blazed forth one immense sheet of lightning,'

which extended far throughout the regions of space. The storm passed over quickly, and all was fair again; but soon after, from some cause still unexplained, a rent occurred near the top of the balloon, which immediately collapsed, and began to descend with frightful rapidity. With admirable presence of mind Mr. Coxwell with his knife liberated the neck of the balloon, which, ascending towards the crown, allowed the machine to assume the form of a parachute. This precaution proved successful, for although they came to the ground with terrific violence, none of the aeronauts sustained serious injury.

Another remarkable voyage of Mr. Coxwell's was commenced, 16th June, 1857, at North Woolwich, and terminated near Tavistock, the distance (nearly 250 miles) having been performed in five hours, or considerably less than the time occupied by the express railway-trains. Recently Mr. Coxwell, in company with Colonel M'Donald and several officers of the Rifle Brigade, travelled from Winchester Barracks to Harrow (nearly seventy miles) in one hour and six minutes.

Of the ascents made last and continued this year for meteorological observations, many papers have lately appeared; ours confines itself more to the history of balloons, and especially are we interested in the Mammoth balloon and its clever contriver, Mr. Coxwell, the intrepid manager of those ascents. The last ascent of the past year's series

took place at Wolverhampton on the 5th September. Mr. Glaisher's testimony to the ability of the aeronaut is hearty and enthusiastic. He expressly says that the power of taking observations at a great height depends absolutely on the skill of the conductor of the balloon. He congratulates the Association on having secured the services of Mr. Coxwell, who has made 480 ascents, has great scientific knowledge, and knows the 'why' and the 'because' of all his operations.

They reached on this occasion to a height of over six miles, and sufficiently ascertained that this was almost the limit to which the endurance of man's physical capacity can carry him. For some time before that height had been reached Mr. Glaisher had been unable to record his observations, and had become insensible, while Mr. Coxwell was somewhat overcome by the effects of the rare atmosphere in which they were moving; indeed, when he at last became convinced that he had gone as high as was consistent with prudence, and endeavoured to reach the connecting cord to open the valve, he found his hands black and benumbed so as to be utterly powerless; and here Mr. Coxwell's never-failing presence of mind availed them in the last extremity, for, seizing the cord with his teeth, he opened the valve, and as a consequence they were soon speeding towards the lower regions. What might have been the result if Mr. Coxwell's teeth had failed him as well as his hands is too horrible for conjecture. The two daring aerial sailors might have died, while their ship traversed the vast realms of space, like Coleridge's spectre-ship or the 'Flying Dutchman.' It is just possible that it might have continued its weird voyage for years in those quiet realms where the action of the elements for the effects of decay in either organic or inorganic substances we suppose to be almost inappreciable.

We are all familiar with Nadar's recent perilous ascent in the 'Giant' balloon, which he seems to think destined to solve the aerial problem.

Since the directors of the Crystal Palace will allow 'London Society' to form a judgment, at the rate of a shilling a head, we may pass over the 'Giant' without further notice in our historical summary.

The French have used balloons in warfare on several occasions. It is said that at the battle of Fleurus a surprise was prevented by a reconnaissance conducted in this manner. In the battle of Liege, during the French Revolution, the success of the victors was, for the most part, secured by the same means: the weak places of the enemy's lines were detected, attacked, and forced. A balloon was also used to examine the fortress of Ehrenbreitzen, which, on account of its height, could have been seen in no other way.

Explorations have been undertaken in Australia and America, and many daring ascents made in those countries; but our space is exhausted. Should any one object to the science of ballooning, '*Cui bono?*' we cannot do better than reply in the words of Mr. Coxwell, extracted from a recent publication of his:—

'If astronomy, geology, steam power, electricity, and nautical science cannot

boast of having made one bound towards perfection, why should ballooning? We have only just succeeded in making ships go against the wind, and why should we despair of mastering an aerial vehicle? The difficulties to be surmounted are well understood, and for a time baffle ingenuity; but I would urge renewed attempts, for remember, it is not more than eighty years since the first balloon travelled the air; and if we could now inspect a specimen of a boat constructed eighty years after men began to venture on the water, depend upon it we would sooner cross the Atlantic in the Great Eastern than venture to Gravesend in the primitive pigmy of our forefathers. Ballooning as an art, is, I am convinced, steadily advancing; and although the uninitiated may not observe much progress, because the machine does not strikingly deviate from the wind, yet the various appurtenances gradually undergo improvement, and in a short time I have no doubt that balloons, like the old men of war, will be cast aside for new models; and then, just as the application of steam requires a reconstruction of our war vessels, so will some new power demand a similar alteration for vessels in the air; so that the difficulties which appeared insurmountable at the beginning of the nineteenth century may be at last dispelled, and the great high-road to all the nations of the earth (the atmosphere) may be travelled triumphantly.'



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Drawn by A. Pasquier.

HERBERT FREER'S PERPLEXITIES.

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HERBERT FREER'S PERPLEXITIES:

A Love Story for Christmas.

IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

'A LUCKY YOUNG DOG.'

WHEN Herbert Freer first settled in Severnsbury he would have seemed to you, or indeed to any one, about the most unlikely man in England to have furnished such a title as that which I have prefixed to the story I have to tell.

Perplexities indeed! How should he have any? A young fellow of thirty, he had come down there to manage the Severnsbury branch of the Metropolitan and District Banking Company. He had a salary of six hundred a year, which, as everybody knows, is double the income on which (it has been conceded by the 'Times,') a man may lawfully marry. Nay, besides this he had, it was known, some interest as partner in the bank itself. His interest, he said, was merely that which Lazarus had in the dinner of Dives. He was allowed to pocket now and then a sovereign which could not be conveniently crammed into the bags of the chairman and directors; but his own profits in that way were altogether contingent on the success of the exertions of himself and his brother managers to earn more money than these bags could be made to hold. So talked Herbert Freer of himself. But then a young fellow who is doing well in the world is apt to speak banteringly of his income. We know that there are houses where even the post of Lazarus would be sought by many candidates. And everybody in Severnsbury knew that the Metropolitan and District Bank was one of those good things in which a share is not to be had by outsiders at any price, and in which a share, being once had, is not lightly surrendered. Then, too, it was known that Herbert's father had died in very comfortable circumstances, and that Herbert had inherited all.

Probably gossip was therefore not far wrong in setting down the young manager's income at something like fifteen hundred a year, and in assuming that (though six hundred a year is surely worth looking after) he filled his official post not so much because of the income it gave him as because it gave him something, without giving him over-much, to do. At the same time it was granted that he did his work in no mere spirit of dilettantism. He had the reputation of being a thoroughly good man of business—not easily over-reached, and yet not over-reaching. Much as his clerks liked him they respected him more. Add to these advantages that he had a frank and winning way, a good temper, good health, and a handsome person, and we may well ask what more need he wish that Fortune should do for him.

Herbert Freer, in short, was declared by everybody to be 'a very lucky young dog;' and, what was more to his credit (and is not invariably the fact with lucky young dogs as a species), he was admitted by most people to deserve his luck.

Yet, for all this, we shall see in the sequel that it was not in any serene heaven of his own that he lived;—that he had to breathe the common, perturbed air like the rest of us;—had his anxieties as we have ours, and walked out often with black care for an attendant;—had to wrestle hard with doubts and indecisions;—knew how hard is the pillow to which sleep will not come;—often 'heard the chimes at midnight' while he tried in vain to balance conscience with expediency;—in a word, that he too was taken prisoner by the horrid sphinx who tries us all with the riddles that we have to answer on peril of our lives,

and was well-nigh drowned in perplexities, as, indeed, too many of us are in this most perplexing world.

Moreover, if a young lady's opinion be of weight, it is undeniable that in Severnside there were many estimable young ladies who would have been ready to declare that for a man like Herbert Freer to remain unmarried as he did was nothing less than a clear tempting of Providence, a clear laying of himself open to all manner of troubles and perplexities from which they themselves would, any of them, have undertaken to guard him. For Herbert, it must be admitted, brought with him the reputation of being of a disposition, in matters amatory, vexatious both to mammas and daughters; and it soon appeared that he really deserved this reputation. No angler of course expects to land a salmon as easily as a gudgeon. But allowing that a good fish is worth some little trouble, and indeed has a right to decline to be caught without giving trouble, yet even the most patient of anglers, of mammas, of daughters, may be provoked and wearied out sometimes; and Herbert, it was complained, would neither take a bait nor leave it alone. No one was more ready than he to join the girls in their pic-nics—to row them on the river—to walk with them—to talk with them—to read poetry to them—even to write verses for them—to dance with them—to take them to concerts and lectures—in short, to be their assiduous dangler in any of the thousand and one capacities in which dangles are so useful. But what avail pic-nicings and boatings, moonlight walkings and moony talkings, if they are to be merely their own reward? Ladies of practical habits, alive to the stern realities of milliners' bills and unmarried angels, look on these trivial gallantries as only the necessary preliminaries to more important negotiations. To persist in them too long is a mere 'tarrying in the letter that killeth' deeply cherished hopes. And somehow these charming junketings, no matter how dexterously contrived or how often repeated, did not bring about that softening of

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To drop the fighting metaphor, as this is to be quite a peaceful story—out of his excessive good-nature—out of his obliging disposition—out of his amiability, his friendliness, his general *bonhomie*, there had grown a belief that these very qualities were what prevented and would prevent him from ever seriously falling in love. It was argued (not certainly by very profound logicians) that a young man who was politeness itself would shrink from doing so uncivil a thing as to pass by and give the cut direct to all the young ladies of Severnside save one. Again and again it had been announced by the established gossips that he *was* engaged to and about to marry the eldest Miss Fetherfew, the youngest Miss Fetherfew, the second Miss Fether-

few, Miss Bertha Peacock, Miss Woodley (niece to old Colonel Woodley)—nay, he had even been talked about in connection with the venerable Miss Phillips herself (whose age was guessed to be about a thousand, and whose money in the funds about a million). But he only let this talk ebb and flow at its own sweet will. When its ripples dashed right up against him sometimes, he skipped out of the way of them; sometimes he met the small deluge with a laugh and a joke. As for a serious denial or a serious confirmation he was too wise to give it. For he knew, as we all know, that in all such gossip the word of the supposed principal in matrimonial arrangements is the last word that is believed. So rumour went on prophesying, and he contented himself with simply letting the prophecies remain unfulfilled. Such had been the state of affairs for nearly two years; and Severnsbury had at last become quite incredulous. A settled conviction had grown up in the minds of Herbert's acquaintance that he had not in him the stuff of which a lover is made. For a lover must have his heats and impetuosities, his eagerness, his strokes (it may be almost admitted) of sharp practice against rivals; and Herbert had shown so far none of these qualities. He had exhibited himself only in the character of an easy, good-tempered, clever, and rather careless fellow. When, therefore, it was blown about by old Mrs. Fetherfew that she was *sure* he was 'very sweet on Miss Foster,' and that she (Mrs. Fetherfew) was *quite* sure there really was 'something in it' this time, Severnsbury only shook his wise head and declined to have its credulity imposed on any more. Mrs. Fetherfew talked, as the winds of heaven blow, just as she listed; but it was said that if she talked as freely as the winds she also talked as idly; and so it came about that she was just as little regarded as they.

CHAPTER II.

'LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE.'

Herbert's acquaintance with the Fosters was not more than a month

old when this latest gossip first began to gain ground; and in order that we may see how far it had really any foundation—how far it merely resembled the many other idle rumours that had gone before it—we shall go back to the beginning of this acquaintance.

Of course when Herbert first came to Severnsbury he came well provided with letters of introduction. And even had he not done so, and had the repute of fifteen hundred a year not been in itself a tolerably good introduction, he would not have been long without acquaintances. Amongst other notes, he had brought one to Captain Foster; but he had kept it unrepresented so long that at last he had become ashamed to present it at all, and so he had, instead of doing so, simply put it in the fire. He had, indeed, met the captain once or twice at other people's houses, and so had come to be on speaking terms with him; but the acquaintance had never become more than a casual one. Wandering, however, one evening down the terrace in which the captain lived, he noticed at the door of his house the figure of a young man, who pulled the bell with, apparently, some little hesitation, stooped down after having done so as if to listen whether it had rung or not, and, seemingly having satisfied himself that it had *not*, descended the steps, and was walking off briskly with that relieved expression of countenance which a man wears when he has suddenly decided to put off a call which he is not over-anxious to make; but in turning to walk off he turned face to face with Herbert.

'Do you often do that, Phil? Are you ringing at *all* the doors and running away, or merely taking them in a casual way?'

The runaway was one of Herbert's most intimate companions, by name Philip Grey.

'Oh! confound it,' he said, 'I have pulled two or three times, and either it doesn't ring or they have seen me through the window and don't care to answer it. Besides the captain is such a bore I am glad to have an excuse for going away.'

Herbert laughed. 'Then let us

have a walk,' he said, and linking their arms they turned and had a walk for about two paces when they found themselves in the arms of Captain Foster himself, who had come on them at that instant unawares from behind.

'Well, I declare,' said Philip Grey; 'I was just trying to persuade Freer to call with me and see you.'

'Were you indeed; then I hope he will at any rate be persuaded by the two of us.'

Herbert bowed and said, 'Very happy.'

The captain rang, and having perhaps the knack of ringing his own bell better than any one else, or being perhaps more in earnest than Philip Grey, his ring was answered at once.

'I wonder whether he heard me call him a bore,' muttered Philip.

'I fancy he did,' said Herbert.

And, so speculating, the young men entered with their host; and this was the manner of Herbert Freer's first introduction to the house of Captain Foster. How often, I wonder, do hosts and guests meet, and chat, and entertain each other with similar frankness and cordiality! Whether Captain Foster really had overheard that remark of Philip Grey's or not, he made no sign of having done so. But how many of us would like occasionally to let our dear friends know that we are aware of the lie they have just told us, only that courtesy condemns us to silence and hypocrisy! The gallant captain led his friends in and seated them at his table. He gave them of his wine and of his cigars; he entertained them with what he sincerely believed to be very brilliant conversation; and all the while, for anything I know, he was thinking of that unlucky stricture of Philip's and aiming to prove to Herbert how unjust it was. All the while, possibly, both the young gentlemen were interesting themselves less in his remarks than in certain tinkling sounds which they could barely hear, and which indicated that a piano was being played in some distant room of the house.

For Philip at least knew well enough who the pianiste was. To

say truth there had been some tender passages between him and Miss Foster, and the real cause of his indecision as to whether he should call at Captain Foster's house had arisen from doubt how she would receive him; and from a faint conviction on his part that probably it would be better that these tenderesses should go no further. His valour, therefore, had for once exhibited itself in the better shape of discretion, prompting him to run away. But now that he was in the house he wanted to be with her, and fidgeted under the assiduous courtesies of his entertainer. So he said at last, interrogatively, in a break of the conversation, 'Miss Foster is at home then?' and pointed in the direction from whence the sound of the piano came—as if he had not been quite well aware of that fact before he entered the house. And by-and-by, after this hint and another or two like it, the captain led the young men to the drawing-room and introduced them to his daughter, who was playing there alone.

Captain Foster was a widower, and it was no secret that his means were only strait. He had indeed but little income beyond the half pay on which he had retired; and though it could not be said of him, as it was said of Lieutenant Luff, that 'his half pay did not half pay his debts,' it was known that he always lived tightly up to his resources. His daughter Ida was the eldest of his children, and had now come home, at the age of twenty, to take charge of his house. Besides her there was only Arthur left, a boy of ten. Between them there had been four others. Arthur could remember the time when there was only one little green mound besides the larger one in the cemetery. This larger one had always been there as far as he could remember: indeed it had had to be made as soon as he came into the world. But these lesser hillocks had all been made within the last five or six years, and Arthur, himself a delicate child, was left now without a playmate at all.

It happened that Herbert had never met Miss Foster before. She had during the last year or two been

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much from home, and had only returned to Severnsbury a few weeks previously. But though he had not seen her he had often heard of her and of her beauty, and he was quite prepared to admire her. And Ida Foster was indeed very beautiful. Tall, dark, healthy, graceful, and animated, it seemed as if all the vigour which should have been shared by the poor little brothers and sisters had been foreseized by the first-born.

When the gentlemen entered the room she rose, shook hands with Philip, honoured Herbert with a gracious inclination of the head; and, being asked to continue playing, did so at once in a ready unhesitating way, which said pleasantly, as plainly as words could have said, that she knew she had a right to play for the reason that she really could play.

There is something very surprising—I had almost said very humiliating—in the way in which music, the most spiritual of all human arts, is often degraded into a merely mechanical work, and the trick of playing made, too evidently, a trick essentially the same in its nature as the sleight-of-hand of a conjuror. We see very ordinary women play, with a dexterity and accuracy that charm their hearers, pieces of music to compose which has tasked all the powers of the greatest masters. They execute the most difficult passages and the most brilliant movements without any apparent effort, and people cry, 'What a wonderful player!' And all the while these women may be only clever, trained automata, as soulless and unappreciative of what they do as Mr. Babbage's calculating-machine, and as unlike real musicians as that machine is unlike (and unfit to be) a Chancellor of the Exchequer. Their criticisms on music would probably be the perfection of absurdity or commonplace. They have never paused to consider the meaning of what they play, or asked what was intended to be conveyed by the grand passages they execute so readily. Sorrow, joy, anger, love, disappointment, ecstasy, despair—every emotion that thrills our mortal bodies was felt, it may

be, by the mighty master as he swept the chords and brought out these melodies. To the player it is all mere wrist-and-finger work. And yet so wonderfully correct is the mechanical performance that, as the electric current flashes through and gathers strength from the passive insulator, to the hearer all these passions may still come out and live again, evolved by her who neither feels them nor knows them.

Ida Foster was not, however, a player of this kind. Music with her was a true passion and delight, and playing second nature. Sometimes, it is true, she played, as a certain humble hero whistled, for want of thought; but oftenest she played because she found in playing peace and calm and better thoughts than came to her in the daily wrestle with the world, in the daily cares and anxieties, the daily plottings and small conspiracies with which, unhappily, young-lady life is often disturbed. At any rate she never played for mere show. And Herbert Freer, as well as his companion, soon felt that it would have been an impertinence to have formally thanked her as she passed from tune to tune and piece to piece.

There was a little air of her own composing which she played at last, and said archly—

'Mr. Freer, I hear you are a poet; will you listen to this air, and when you go home present my respectful compliments to the Muses and request them to inspire you with words to fit it?'

And Herbert, being gallant, said that if he found the Muses sitting up for him on his return home he really would put Miss Foster's requirements before them; though, on account of the great advance which had lately taken place in the price of oil, they had taken to going to bed early, and he doubted he would be too late unless he were off at once.

So, laughing, the young men took their hats and bade good-night.

There was the tinkle of water in the little air, Herbert thought, as if it were water dropping on glass; there was laughter with tears in it; there was the languor of love with

its doubts and fears in it. At any rate Herbert felt he could not be far wrong if he wrote nonsense to it, seeing that new music is so seldom set to anything else. This, therefore, is what he produced; but not before he had considerably disarranged his hair and his temper, had long sat out his fire, and nibbled the feathers off more quills than seemed at all necessary:—

‘BROWN EYES.

‘Dark brown, dark eyes, speaking ever,
Life, and light, and laughter quiver
In those eyes; ah me, those eyes!
Bright brown eyes; ah me, those eyes!’

‘Like a planet richly glowing,
Tender meanings from them flowing,
Full of moving memories;
Bright brown eyes; ah me, those eyes!’

And when Miss Foster received the effusion next day, ‘with Mr. Freer’s compliments,’ she did not need to ask whose eyes were meant, but began, we are sorry to say, to inquire of herself whether she really had made a mark or not.

Whether Herbert also began so early to ask himself deliberately any question similar to that of Miss Foster’s it would in the present stage of this history be premature to say. Possibly a new pavement had been put down in the direction of Burton Terrace, and Herbert therefore felt more pleasure in walking in that direction than he used to feel. Possibly Captain Foster’s chairs had softer cushions, and fewer thorns in them than Herbert found under him elsewhere. Possibly (if the supposition be not libellous) Ida Foster’s nimble fingers and gracious glances were more to his taste than those of the Misses Fetherfew. At any rate when Mrs. Fetherfew said so positively that she was quite sure there was ‘something in it,’ she had this much of foundation for her assertion, that Herbert, namely, had during the month then just past been less often at her own house and more frequently at Captain Foster’s than she found at all agreeable to the plans she had herself matured for Herbert’s happiness, and than argued appreciation of the hospitality she so generously proffered him on all occasions of their meeting.

Herbert, in fact, found his intimacy with the Fosters pleasant and agreeable, and it thrived apace. It progressed, said Phil Grey, ‘like a house on fire.’ And as Phil felt himself a little eclipsed, and as he knew how narrowly he had himself escaped the flames, if indeed he had escaped at all, it is to be feared he looked on with something of the pleased interest and very doubtful commiseration with which good neighbours, who happen to have had their own house burnt down, generally do look on at other people’s tenements in that predicament.

CHAPTER III.

SIRENIA REDIVIVA.

In these days Herbert had a very decided fancy that he was literary; and one of the subjects on which he determined to be especially eloquent was the not very novel one of ‘The Sirens.’

‘When the world was very young indeed,’ he wrote, ‘and when the heavens were much nearer to it than they are now—when the father of the gods used to come down and make love to the daughters of men—there was a fair island, in a fairer ocean, and underneath its cliffs of dazzling whiteness you might any day have seen Neptune himself riding on his dolphin in a way you can never hope to see him now. The maidens of that island were very fair to look upon, and their voices were as the hidden soul of harmony. Out of heaven there is now no beauty, nor any music to be compared with theirs. The sailors could not choose but cast anchor and remain always in their blissful company. So none who landed on that island ever returned home with tidings of its wonders.

‘In process of time, however, one passed that way who stopped the ears of his crew with wax, and caused them to bind him to the mast, that so they might sail under the shadow of the island, and he might hear the harmony and yet not be induced to stay. Then they saw that the cliffs so dazzlingly white were of the bleached bones of men, and they

concluded that the maidens who were so fair, and sang so sweetly, were really no better than they should be; if, indeed, they were not mere cannibal young females.

'Since then the world has grown a great deal older, and its people think themselves a great deal wiser. The stars have gone much further back and become astronomical. That Elysian ocean has wholly dried up. That enchanted island is to be found in no map extant. Only the sirens, under changed names, and wearing modern dresses, still remain, and still to our extreme inconvenience retain their old unsocial and very disagreeable habits.'

That this, and many pages to which it was introductory, was a piece of very fine writing which would be jumped at by any editor in England before whom it might be held up—though unfortunately the essay was apropos of nothing particular—it never entered Herbert's mind to doubt. But that the fable could have any practical moral for himself to take to heart: that sirens did really still exist amongst his own acquaintance disguised in genteel crinoline and playing elegantly on pianos: nay, even that he himself was at that moment in imminent danger of having his own bones clean picked by one—this was a *reductio ad absurdum* which if put before him he would have scouted with disdain.

And yet if he had been asked what it was that attracted him, and made him flutter round Ida Foster, as a moth flutters round a candle, he could have given but poor reasons. He would have said she had a bright eye—yet he had read Tennyson, and might have remembered that so had wily Vivien. He would have said she had a sweet voice—yet he had read Milton, and might have called to mind that the *fallen* angels sang very sweetly. He would have said she had a gentle touch—yet he kept a cat and had observed its habits. He would have said she had a pretty name—yet he would have needed no one to remind him that that was a merit due more to her godfathers and godmothers than herself. The truth must be

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told. Herbert, the superb—Herbert, the cool, the self-possessed—was really by no means so much himself as he used to be. And Ida, who had angled often in sport, was angling now in earnest. It is painful to us to have so soon to dethrone a young lady who may have been mistaken for a heroine. But the spoils of her skill had been already more than a woman with a heart ever does gain. Hitherto she had practised only for scientific purposes. She had studied with all the coolness of an anatomist the degree of torture which her unhappy subjects might be made to endure, without making such an exhibition of themselves as would be positively disagreeable to her. And when this stage was reached, it had been her wont to exchange her subject for another one. Cool, clever, and heartless, she had brought flirtation probably to as high a pitch of perfection as it is destined ever to attain. She knew exactly how far she could go to inflict the maximum of mischief without openly compromising herself, and beyond this point she never went. She had never yet failed to enslave when she fairly bent herself to her task, and she had every confidence that she—as indeed any woman to her thinking—could marry any man who came within her reach were she only sufficiently determined. And determined she was to marry Herbert Freer, even before she saw him. Not that to herself she made any pretence of loving him. Love was a passion that she knew only from witnessing its effects—very ridiculous she thought them—in others. But if she could not love, she could act very cleverly, and said contemptuously that private theatricals were more amusing off the stage than on it—in her opinion. And those who knew her best would have found it hard to tell in which of her doings she played an assumed part; in which she was herself. Music was the one pursuit in which she seemed entirely in earnest, and her love of which was thoroughly sincere. If when she played she charmed all ears, let us hope, too, that she exorcised for a while her own evil

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spirit, and rose from her piano and her harp with purer and less selfish thoughts than those which so soon resumed their hold upon her. And she knew that in music lay her power; but, alas! without perceiving that her power lay there, because there lay for a while nature and truth.

Herbert, for his part, might never have heard of the sirens—much less have written an essay on them. Whether it was that his hour had fully come—whether for his sins he had been doomed for a certain time to walk this earth in pain and perplexity—whether the gods had really driven him out of his wits, intending in a little while to deal still worse with him—however these things might be, in one short month Ida Foster's scheme had prospered so far that he had become her slave, and waited humbly on her in a way that he had never waited on woman before. And Phil Grey, whose vision had been a little cleared, by the way in which he had been forced to open his eyes, when Ida threw him overboard somewhat earlier than her wont, stood looking on, and making comparisons, like that which was recorded at the end of the last chapter.

Not that even a month had passed over without Herbert's beginning to have some little doubt as to Ida being in all things the 'perfect woman, nobly planned,' his fancy had at first painted her. But here again his good nature told against him. When he noticed any fault, he did not so much think worse of Ida for it, as approve his own good judgment, that he could see faults at all in one with whom he already began to suspect he was falling in love.

For example, Phil had told him in a friendly way that Ida had jilted him, and had hinted further, that he was, he believed, far from the first whom she had served so. Well, Herbert had admitted that such conduct was very wrong; but it is wonderful how easily we forgive unfaithfulness in love, which we imagine to have been practised in our own favour. We think, at any

rate, it is some compensation for the fair one's perfidy, that we ourselves should be kind and sympathetic with her victim; and, again, it is surprising how kindly a man really does think of his unsuccessful rival. So Herbert readily forgave Ida all her flirtations without even wishing to hear them recounted. And, if possible, he felt more friendly than ever to Philip Grey.

Then, too, one thing that Herbert most thoroughly enjoyed, was a hearty, good laugh, on due provocation; or, failing due provocation, even on no provocation at all. And he winced a little at the impassiveness of Ida. She smiled very sweetly on him, but he could never get her to join him in a real good laugh. Her calm, clear-cut face, never so far lost its self-possession—never seemed to be moved with common passion; and to say truth, Herbert would have liked better to see it so agitated. Yet he reflected that in all his reading he had never read that the angels themselves laughed; they, too, only smiled, and must, he thought, smile very much as Ida smiled; and a man must be hard to please indeed who finds fault with a young lady merely for being of an angelic temperament.

But there were other glimpses, also, which Herbert got into the life of the Foster household which gave him little qualms, and made him doubt whether there might not be times when his angel did not even smile. The captain always spoke to Ida more meekly than seemed consistent with parental authority. Arthur moved more noiselessly in her presence than elsewhere, and had his little eyes often fixed on her when he was speaking to other people. In a hundred ways Herbert was made to suspect that Ida had a temper, and was accustomed to make that fact noticed at home.

All these things had Herbert seen, and pondered, and laid to heart. But when did love ever pretend to base itself on judgment? He was rather proud than otherwise of feeling that he was beginning to love unwisely. He repeated to himself that line about 'not wisely, but too

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well,' and it is to be feared, thought in his innermost heart that so to love was rather a noble action, and one that put him in the category of many of the most charming heroes in the best romances.

When, therefore, he walked home one night and ruminated on the fact that he had that night made Ida a passionate offer of his hand, and yet had been dismissed in ignorance what the result of that offer was to be, he then realized, perhaps for the first time, that for him, too, as for the rest of us, there was reserved doubt and trouble and perplexity; and that a book might be bound in velvet with gilt edges, as he had fancied the volume of his life's history to be, and yet have in it lines very hard to read.

For feline nature is always the same; and Ida, true to her instinct, and feeling sure of her bird, could not forbear to play with it for a while much as she would have been grieved to lose it. So she had begun the game of 'fast and loose' with Herbert, and had sent him home with such an answer as left him bound while it left her free.

CHAPTER IV.

CONSTANCY.

It happened the day after this crisis had been reached that Ida very unexpectedly, and very much to her annoyance, had to leave Severnsbury with her papa for a week. She could not well write to Herbert before starting, that as soon as he had left her she had made up her mind graciously to accept him. Besides, she had wanted to have a day or two's amusement with him; to have heard a few more protestations and a few more entreaties, and at last to have had the crowning triumph of pronouncing with her own lips the sentence of his happiness. To be hurried away, therefore, at such a time was especially provoking. There was no excuse for sending Herbert her address even. Yet to leave him to himself for a whole week in such a critical state was what Ida by no means liked. She tried to miss the train that so she

might have a chance of meeting him by accident and saying a tender word before she started. But though she was late herself the train was still later, and she caught it to a nicety.

When Herbert called that evening, therefore, as usual in Burton Terrace, and learnt that the family had gone off but a few hours before to Clifton, he believed that the 'invalid relative' and the 'urgent family matters,' which were said to be the occasion of this sudden journey, were equally apocryphal. He did not in the least believe that the journey could really have been an unforeseen and an unavoidable one, but at once concluded that it was a flight deliberately taken for the purpose of getting out of his way after the events of the preceding night. He believed this the more readily as no message appeared to be left for him; and he was too proud to ask the servant for an address which he thought had been purposely withheld.

Herbert's dog, for sitting, as was its wont, in Herbert's easy chair, caught it that night in a way which excited the utmost surprise of that quadruped: and it stood blinking its mild eyes on the rug, and licking its feet thoughtfully, as if seeking in some undiscovered speck of mud for the cause of its master's ill-usage, until at last it gave up the problem and sulked off out of sight. Herbert's cigar would not burn at all; and Herbert's lamp would burn at such a rate that it broke the chimney. Herbert's maid was never so near giving warning as she was at his unusually snappish way. Herbert walked late in the garden. The very moon shone, he thought, with a cold malicious brightness, not its wont, as if to show how insignificant he and his troubles were. It was an ill-made moon, not at all round. The ground was hard frozen. The few flowers that were left—chrysanthemums and Michaelmas daisies—hung frostbitten on their stalks with icy tears pendant, as if weeping that they were not released from such a tiresome world. Where was the good of moon, or flowers, or frost? Herbert went in and went to

bed dissatisfied with the universe in general, and with this planet in particular, and with himself more than any mortal upon it.

If to go to sleep were as easy as to go to bed what good nights we should all have! Herbert had never known such pillows. He tried them all sides up. He doubled them. He straightened them out again. Then he flung them away and lay with his head in an extemporized pit. Then he dozed off into nightmare. Then he got up and walked about his bedroom and heard quarter after quarter clanged from the minster clock. What could be Ida's meaning? Was he really, after all, such a poor fellow that she merely wished to amuse herself with him as he had heard she had amused herself with others? And if so, was she not for all that really an angelic creature, and would it not be 'sweeter for her despairing than aught in the world beside?' And so the weary night wore away, as the longest nights wear away for those who are more sick than even he was; and he rose in the morning not refreshed, and looking a little—just a little paler than usual. He thought when he looked in the glass that he ought to have appeared worse than he did, and was possibly a little dissatisfied with himself for not doing so. But then he was robust, and hearts are not quite broken, nor hair turned quite white in a single night; and it was imperative, therefore, that he should give himself time.

This was only Tuesday, too, and Ida was not to return till the following Monday: (this much he *had* learnt from the maid); so that he had a week to grow pale in and to perfect the outward signs of his inward trouble. And certainly in this week he did his best. Those who have suffered from love-sickness will not need, and those who have not so suffered will not care, to read the detail of his self-torture. His temper grew worse and worse and surprised everybody who knew him. Day after day, and night after night, the same wearisome restlessness and mad discontent. Could Ida only have seen him or known

what an impression she really had made, her fears would have been relieved, and she would have felt that she could hardly have done better than try him thus, in the old-fashioned way, with absence.

Severnsbury, however, had other inhabitants besides the Fosters; and Herbert having played misanthrope all the week, did really so far recover on the Saturday evening as to take one of his favourite walks. This walk was along the terrace, above which towers Severnsbury minster, standing high and looking down on Severn waters. Away over the river lie rich fields; and in the further distance rises proudly the range of hills on which Piers Plowman so many centuries ago took his morning walk, and which offered then the same bold outline as we see to-day. To-night, however, the hills were not visible; for the darkness in December falls down early. The moon had not yet risen; and the stars, though bright, were not bright enough to bring out the hills. So Herbert leaned over the low wall and watched the stars as they lay reflected in the water. How bright and steady they were! Or if the dancing of a wave but made a star for an instant tremble out of sight, how soon it returned. Even so, he vowed, should his love burn. If it ever flickered, so soon should it resume its steadiness. If for an instant it was obliterated and disappeared, so soon should his true heart again reflect the bright image of his worship.

And then he wandered on into the minster close to where his old friend Canon Woodstock lived, and where he found him at that moment taking his canonical pleasure, walking and smoking, on his own lawn in front of his own house, in the clear frosty air, well buttoned up in his overcoat.

Herbert felt, as low-spirited people often do, unusually moral and decorous. So it jarred on his feelings, and he thought it almost irreligious for a clergyman to be smoking so near Sunday. And for his own part he felt that, thinking as he did with such tender despair about Ida, for *him* to smoke would

be a carnal indulgence, almost bordering on profanity. So he at first declined to join Mr. Woodstock in that exercise; and though, on repeated invitation, he relented, he only lit up at last in a melancholy way that compelled his jolly friend to ask, 'Why, Freer, what on earth's the matter?' Whereupon Herbert of course declared that nothing was the matter, and put on a preposterous affectation of gaiety which in no way deceived his quickwitted companion.

Canon Woodstock was an ecclesiastical dignitary; but he was, beyond that, 'a plain, blunt man, who loved his friend.' He had known Herbert almost as a boy; long before Herbert had come to Severn-bury. Before the cigars were finished he had, with a few downright sentences, got to know pretty nearly how the wind lay with the young gentleman, and he had conveyed his sentiments with more point than politeness.

'Don't be a fool,' he said to Herbert. 'You come in with me. If you are determined to fall in love, I have got the girl for you.'

But when people are in a very high-flown and sentimental mood, they resent the exercise of common sense on the part of their friends as something approaching very nearly to a personal affront. So when Mr. Woodstock introduced to Herbert his niece and ward as 'My niece, Miss Margaret Winter,' we doubt the young man met her with some little prejudice, and smiled inwardly, with a lofty pity, at the mind which could hint at the possibility of his ever changing in his constancy. And Miss Winter, who had heard Herbert spoken of as a merry fellow, and who was herself merry within all limits of becoming mirth, opened her eyes wide and wondered at the solemn countenance he tried to keep as long as he could.

CHAPTER V.

'TOO LATE.'

If this narrative were a mere piece of fiction, the narrator would feel that the lines had fallen to him in very stony places, and that he

was hobbling through his plot in a very lame and ungainly manner. For the storyteller who deliberately saddles himself with a hero whose conduct is not at all heroic, and with a presumptive heroine who turns out a flirt almost as soon as she has dropped her first curtsy, can hardly escape being told at once by our modern Touchstones, 'Thou'rt in a parlous state, shepherd.' But here it is the voracious historian has the advantage over the mere fictionist. If his characters really did this when they ought to have done that, or did that when they ought to have done this, well, the historian may regret it; but he cannot help it. Honest Griffiths must write all down as he finds it, happy if only he can blot with a tear the faults and shortcomings which he dare not conceal or extenuate.

From all of which preamble it will have been inferred by the moderately sagacious reader that there is some danger of Herbert Freer falling from his high estate and proving to be scarcely that model of faithfulness he had vowed to be. For pride does, indeed, as in old times, go still before a fall. And Herbert had been so proud of his fervour and devotion, and had gone up so much like a rocket, that we need not be surprised if he presently come down like the stick of that brilliant firework.

Not that we have to relate that he fell without a struggle. Indeed, he tried hard to disregard Canon Woodstock's advice, and to be that fool he was recommended not to be. For example, no two girls could well be less alike than Ida Foster and Margaret Winter. So Herbert very soon found himself making comparisons to the disadvantage of Margaret. She played, and he thought how much more brilliant was Ida's touch! She sang, and he thought how much clearer and stronger was Ida's voice! She had little fits of timidity, too, and made little blunders; while Ida had a most supreme confidence and never made blunders at all. Certainly, prejudice itself could not but admit that Margaret had, however, a certain nameless

grace about her; and that if other people laughed at her little blunders, no one laughed so heartily as she did herself. And though Herbert, remembering to what empress he had sworn allegiance, would by no means have admitted that Margaret was beautiful, he saw that sweetness and good-temper had marked her for their own, and that the little Woodstocks hung about her in a way that was very charming, but that Ida would never have allowed. He found, too, by-and-by, that Margaret could really talk. Nay, further, that when she talked, there were actually ideas came out of her head as well as words; and that though she did not talk very fluently, and had in her speech, as in her playing, those little fits of hesitation we have recorded against her, she even went so far as sometimes to have opinions in flat contradiction to those he had himself expressed, and could tell him when she thought he was wrong, and why she thought so, without making herself in the least like a 'strongminded woman.' And in this there was really a great deal that Herbert liked; and before he left her that night he had so far overcome the prejudice with which they met as to admit she was just tolerable above the average of intolerable young ladies; and when Mr. Woodstock said at parting 'You'll come and eat your Christmas dinner with us, Herbert,' he answered, that 'he would see,' meaning that if Ida did not invite him, he really would accept the invitation now offered him. 'And as soon as you have seen, you had better write me a line to say what you see,' said the canon; 'for if you don't come I shall have your chair filled by some one else.' Then Herbert walked home, reflecting with a grim self-torture on the question whether it would be possible, in the event of Ida's rejecting him, for him to find some small teaspoonful of comfort in carrying his shattered affections to this little maid, and making her the proud possessor of what he knew he should have to describe to her as an utterly broken heart.

Between the first conception of a dark design, however, and its full

execution, there are many steps. Not even to her husband did Lady Macbeth say, bluntly, in the first instance, 'Come now, let us go and commit a murder.' And Macbeth himself would hardly have recoiled with more horror from such a naked suggestion than that which Herbert felt when he first saw that he had really contemplated it as a possibility that, under any combination of circumstances, he could marry any one but Ida: it was a deliberate suggestion, in fact, that he should commit murder on his own heart's best affections, and he felt all the moral guilt of suicide. Accordingly, when next morning he strolled down to the service in the minster, and having taken his seat in Canon Woodstock's pew, there came in by-and-by Miss Winter, he felt that he was doing quite a meritorious thing to notice how plainly she was dressed and how small she looked, and how far from distinguished; and, in short, how un-Ida-like she was in every way. But yet, as she sat beside him, and as he tried his hardest to muse on the absent face, he found with impatience that his eyes did wander from time to time to the face by his side, though he hoped it was only for the sake of freshening his mental comparisons. And as he heard her low sweet voice, so tender in its earnestness, murmuring the responses to those solemn petitions for 'all such as have erred and are deceived,' 'for all that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation,' he thought how good it would be if in his tribulation a dear voice could so pray specially for him; if he himself should have erred and been deceived, how good it would be to be put right again by such an one as this. And then, as he looked on Margaret Winter kneeling there with solemn down-turned eyes and without a thought of him, 'a spring of love gushed from his heart, and he blessed her unaware.' The scales seemed to fall at once from his eyes. He said within himself (so distinctly and suddenly that he felt almost as startled as if he had said it audibly), 'Here by God's grace is the one maid for me.'

He sat out the rest of the service as in a dream; he shook hands with Margaret and parted as in a dream; he walked home as in a dream; the river flowed beneath him—it was the river of a dream; and like a dream within a dream seemed to him the memory of his thoughts when he had looked at the stars reflected in it but one short night before. It had all come on him so suddenly, that he could hardly believe he was really awake. Yet he felt that in all this dreaming there was one firm reality, that he did now love really and truly, and that this mad passion he had been so assiduously nursing and cherishing, was but the passion of an idle mind and a foolish eye. And never man felt more humiliated than he felt as he thought of his own weakness. Had he but lapsed gradually, had he fallen away by easy stages, had he had any excuse, he thought, he could have forgiven himself. But to be the slave of passion thus like a brute beast: he blushed as he thought of his own inconstancy as if all the thoughts of his heart were open and could be read by every eye that saw him. He had, it is true, had he known it, the same excuse which the blind man had for seeing; namely, that his eyes had been opened; but he himself was as angry as the blind man's neighbours, and accused himself, as if, though he did not see, he *ought to have seen*, and had merely been blind out of obstinacy.

Bad nights he had had before, but they were nights of bliss, he thought, compared with this Sunday night. Fear, and doubt, and restlessness he had had before. But to-night it was mere blind terror, and as it were a savage craving to put matters right by dashing his head against the bedpost. Whenever he sat himself down and tried to think out his problem, it presented itself inexorably in this shape—that Ida assuredly meant to accept his offer, and that however expedient he might now have found it to run off from that offer, yet his honour bound him to it, and his conscience told him he must keep his word even where it had been given so madly.

Then in the morning he came down to breakfast—weak as a child, and found for him, amongst his other letters, one which he felt instinctively was from Ida. It bore the post-mark 'TOO LATE,' and he could not help toying with the envelope, and thinking how many meanings those words had for him. The letter ought then to have come on Sunday morning. Had it done so, with how different feelings he would have opened it! But the joy it might then have brought him—and it would have been joy, though foolish joy—had come TOO LATE. He himself had come to his senses TOO LATE. He was ashamed to confess to himself what a delight it would be to him if it could only turn out that in refusing to tell him her mind a week ago, Ida herself had let slip her golden opportunity and was now TOO LATE.

Ida had thought she might venture, without appearing eager, to write and announce their return home, and she had thought it best to combine a little jocularly with business, and a little flirtation with both.

'My dear sir,' her letter ran, 'if you really were in earnest in the pretty tale you told me the other night, you will be glad to hear that we return home on Tuesday, and that *paper*, at least, will be glad to see you that evening.'

'If you were *not* in earnest, then, for fear I should have been so foolish as to think you were, and should have been looking forward to seeing you again, and you should not wish to come, pray send me something to dry my eyes upon.'

'Ever yours,

'20th Dec. 18—.

'IDA F.'

And she had said to herself that this was tolerably smart, and that if it did not fasten Herbert irrevocably, nothing would.

Herbert felt that there was but one answer he could return, so he wrote on a dainty little sheet of paper—

'Thank you very much for your invitation. I shall not fail to come.'

'HERBERT.

'22 Dec.'

And then he bethought him of Canon Woodstock's invitation to dinner on Christmas Day, and feeling sure that on that day he would be wanted by Ida, he scrawled in pencil, in a slovenly way, on half a sheet of blotting-paper—

'Sorry I cannot come; but thank you all the same for favours intended. I hope you will not have much trouble in finding some one else to put in my chair.'

'HERBERT.'

'22/12.'

And having addressed his envelopes and put his missives into them, he walked off himself and posted them that morning, lest, by keeping them lying all day, he should be tempted to swerve from the path of duty.

CHAPTER VI.

'SAME TO YOU, AND MANY OF THEM.'

It was about eight o'clock on Tuesday night when Herbert started off to Burton Terrace with as much exhilaration as he would have felt in setting off on a walk to be hung. He was turning into the terrace when he met Canon Woodstock, who shook hands heartily, and said, 'Delighted, my boy, to hear that you have seen your way to come and dine with us on Christmas Day.'

'But I wrote you I couldn't come,' said Herbert.

'Not if I can read English,' and he pulled out, as he spoke, Herbert's very neat little note.

'Gracious heavens!' gasped Herbert, 'what have I done!' for as he saw where his letter to Ida had gone he knew also where the half-sheet of blotting-paper had gone. 'I have crossed the letters. Oh, what a pickle!'

'A letter for you, sir: I was just taking it to your house.'

Herbert looked down, and took the letter which was offered him by Captain Foster's messenger. It ran thus:—

'Sir,—My daughter told me the nature of the declaration you amused yourself by making to her a week ago, and she showed me the note

which she sent you two days ago, and which, though perhaps more familiar than was prudent, surely contained nothing to call forth such an impertinent reply as you have thought fit to scrawl in answer to it. At any rate, I do not suppose that even you can be so vain as to imagine Miss Foster's allusion to her tears could be anything but jocular, or that there is any probability of your blotting-paper being required for the purpose you intended it; so I have the honour to return it, and to make it my special request that you will consider your acquaintance with my family at an end. And I am, &c., &c.

'A. FOSTER.'

Herbert put this letter into Mr. Woodstock's hands, explained the matter to him briefly, and said, 'Now I must go to Captain Foster's and explain to him also.'

'You must just do nothing of the kind,' retorted the canon. 'You must thank your stars that you are well out of a mess, and come along with me. Make your apology to-morrow by letter if you are still inclined to sacrifice your happiness for the sake of your politeness.' And he dragged him away almost by main force, Herbert, it is to be confessed, offering less strenuous resistance than he ought to have done.

'What can be the matter with uncle to-night?' said Margaret to Mrs. Woodstock, after the reverend gentleman had for about the twelfth time burst out into inextinguishable guffaws at the recollection of Herbert's predicament.

But Herbert refused to have the mystery explained, and sat, himself alternately merry and angry, alternately blushing and looking pale—glad at any price to be in Margaret's presence, but thinking of the explanation that he must make on the morrow to the Fosters.

And on the morrow he really did set out to make his explanation. It was Christmas Eve, and he heard merry carols in the streets. It was Christmas Eve, and footfalls were muffled in snow, and stars shone

bright, and merry fires gleamed through the windows of every house; and as he walked up to Captain Foster's door he saw them sitting round the fire inside—the captain, and Ida, and little Arthur, and—yes, actually—Philip Grey. He sent in his name, and had in an instant a peremptory 'Not at home;' so he walked off, thinking that if Phil could be happy with Ida so much the better; and that at any rate it would be best for him to make his explanation by letter, and that he could write his letter after Christmas Day was past—which of course he could have done. But we had better say at once that somehow he never did write it; and that to this day the Fosters believe him to have been wilfully guilty of the gross rudeness which they so naturally ascribed to him.

When he had learnt in the above way that the Fosters were *not* at home he strolled on to the Woodstocks, and was fortunate enough to find them at home. So he spent the evening with them in many a merry game. And with hearty, genial talk, and with children climbing up his knees, and with good old songs, and good old punch, and flaming snapdragons, and flaming Yule logs, and even with blushing (we had almost said flaming) Margaret (inveigled once under the mistletoe):—with all this, and with much more that good old English gentlemen love in their homes at good old Christmas time, the night wore rapidly away, and was, as all our pleasures are, alas! pronounced by all to be too short, though the longest (within five minutes), of any night in the year.

And though Herbert had accepted the invitation to dinner by mistake, he went and ate it (as the canon said when he saw the hearty way in which Herbert was enjoying himself) without any mistake at all.

But when dinner was over Herbert thought it a wise precaution, seeing that Canon Woodstock was full to explosion of the great Foster mystery, to take Margaret aside and explain it all to her first himself. And it of course could not be ex-

plained properly without Herbert's saying what was the real cause of his feeling it a relief instead of a trouble to be cashiered by Miss Foster. And Margaret did not seem nearly so surprised at the story Herbert had to tell as Herbert thought she would have been, for love is intuitive in its perceptions.

Then when they went back their host really did produce Herbert's two epistles, and Herbert (very improperly) was induced to reveal as much as was necessary to complete the correspondence; and the laughter was louder and longer than had ever before been known in that house, where merry laughs exploded every day. And when the merriment was at its height, Margaret, God bless her! with tears in her eyes crept round to the back of her uncle's chair, and whispered in his ear that the crossing of the letters had gained her, she was very sure, a good husband.

Years have gone since this Christmas time of which I write. But never Christmas time comes round without the tale of the crossed letters being told afresh, and ever with new merriment.

Margaret—the real original Margaret—is more staid and matronly than she was then.

Herbert Freer's perplexities, he says, have been all so smoothed away that he can hardly think he ever had any. May we all, storytellers and story-readers, come as happily out of ours! A smaller Margaret climbs up his knee, a smaller Herbert up hers; and smaller, smaller people still clap little hands and raise their little voices merrily when Christmas time comes round. And while their little voices blend so cheerily, and while their little hands are red with clapping, and while their little faces shine in the firelight, and all is glowing in the golden light of love, what can the writer of this story say to each-and-all who have followed him through it more fitting than the words which are in every mouth this happy Christmas time:—

'The same to you, and many of them.'

MY AUNT BARBARA'S MISSION TO THE EAST, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.



LWOOD, by-the-way,' said my friend and old schoolfellow, Jack Lawson, as we were seated together one evening in my chambers discussing whisky-punch and cigars, 'did I ever tell you of my Aunt Barbara's visit to the East?'

'What! your aunt, Miss Barbara Tarrant?' said I.

'The same.'

'Was she ever in the East?' I inquired, with some astonishment.

'Once,' replied Jack, dryly, knocking off the ash of his cigar.

'Did she penetrate far?'

'Not very,' replied Jack, in the same tone; 'the fact is,' he continued, after a pause, 'she put her foot in it.'

'Put her foot in it?'

'Rather.'

'As how?'

'Pon my life, old fellow,' said Jack, 'I hardly know if I ought to tell the story, as it's rather a tender subject with her; but she got sold.'

'Sold!' I exclaimed, more and more astonished. 'What! into slavery?'

'Nonsense!' said Jack, 'I didn't mean that; she got done, sir, regularly done. However, if you will promise me to say nothing about the thing, I don't mind telling you.'

Of course I gave the required promise; and Jack, after concocting a fresh brew, began in the following terms:—

'You are aware, of course, that my aunt is one of the strongminded set; goes in for the rights of women, and all that sort of bosh?'

I nodded assent.

'Well, I presume she had been reading the "Memoirs of Lady Hester Stanhope," or something of the sort; but, however that might be, the idea came into her head one fine day that, as the vacant place caused by the departure from this world of that estimable individual had never been filled up, and as none of the strongminded set had ever dreamed of continuing the "mission" of this lady in the East, she was the individual evidently designed by Providence to fill that gap. No sooner had this luminous idea entered her mind than it was acted upon. My aunt, you know, has rather a pretty little property of her own—'

'Which you hope to come in for some of these days,' said I.

'Don't interrupt me. And as she is no longer young, and being, as I before remarked, strongminded, she determined to start forthwith on her mission of civilization. As she argued to herself with perfect propriety, while turning over the pros and cons of this contemplated mission—"Where a Pfeiffer has gone I can go; what a Stanhope has done I can do;" this was an unanswerable argument. So off she went.'

'I needn't bore you with the details of the journey; all travels in the East are alike. You are bitten by mosquitos; you hear jackals howling; your fresh water runs short. I ought to tell you, however, that on landing at Alexandria my aunt proceeded to Cairo, from whence, having hired a lot of servants, she directed her line of march upon Syria, where she

hoped to fall in with the ruins of Lady Hester Stanhope's habitation, in which domicile she purposed establishing herself.

'One day the caravan had halted at one of the usual resting-places, and my aunt had resigned herself to the sweets of a mid-day siesta, when she was suddenly awoken by a tremendous row among her people. "The Arabs! the Arabs are upon us!" they shouted. "We are lost!"

'My aunt has no end of pluck, as you may suppose. On hearing these cries she came forth to the door of her tent to have a look, like a strong-minded one as she was; and, amid a cloud of dust on the horizon, she could distinguish a party of armed horsemen coming down upon them at full gallop. On arriving within a short distance of the little encampment the troop slackened their speed, and one of them, who appeared to be the leader, dismounting from his horse, advanced towards the startled group. He was a magnificent specimen of a Turk was this fellow—tall, handsome, apparently about five-and-thirty years of age, and with an air of command about him that agreed remarkably well with his martial appearance. The camel-drivers were in a devil of a fright; they threw themselves on their faces, shouting out to Allah to save them.

"Get up, you fools!" said the Turk, in a loud voice, administering a slight poke with his foot to the nearest of the prostrate crew. "Conduct me to your mistress."

'My aunt came forward.

"Pearl of the West," continued the Turk, "pardon me for having caused you needless alarm. They wrote to me from Cairo that a fair and noble traveller was about to pass through our territories, and as I have always practised the seventh verse of our Koran, which enjoins the true believer to exercise the rite of hospitality towards the stranger, I have come to offer you the shelter of my humble roof. Tell me, what is your country?"

"England," replied my aunt, proudly.

"England," rejoined the Turk. "Ah, it is a beautiful country! I

paid a visit to it at the time of your Great Exhibition. How is that great pasha, Lord Palmerston? What motive, may I ask, brings you from the land of the lily to that of the palm?"

'Here was an opportunity for my aunt, and she did not neglect it. "I come," she said, with dignity, "to bring you the light of civilization."

"I am sure we are very much obliged to you," replied the Turk. "All that comes from woman is sweet and refreshing as the evening breeze. I trust, therefore, fair bird of passage, that you will honour my humble dwelling by remaining one night beneath its roof."

"My mission exacts, as a duty, that I should accept your invitation," quoth my aunt.

"In that case my slaves shall wait upon you as soon as the heat of day has given place to the coolness of the night. In the mean time I will return to my house to have all things in readiness for your reception."

'My aunt felicitated herself highly upon this fortunate rencontre in the desert which would enable her to commence operations so brilliantly. At first she thought of taking her cavalcade with her, but this idea she abandoned on reflection, as it would appear like a sign of distrust. She took leave of her caravan, then, bidding her cook to prepare the *pillau* for the following day, and to bless Providence the while, for on her return the civilization of the East would have made one great step in the right direction.

'At the appointed time the escort came for my aunt, and after about half an hour's march she was deposited at the gate of a very respectable Moorish-looking house, which was illuminated for the occasion with coloured lamps. The pasha was awaiting her arrival at the door, and very politely offered her his arm to the dining-room. When they had taken their places, Eastern fashion, on couches ranged round a table covered with fruits and flowers, my aunt asked permission of her host to address to him a few questions. Leave being granted, my

aunt opened fire something after this fashion:—

"You are, I presume, thoroughly convinced in your own mind of the truths of your religion?"

"Most indubitably, Lily of the West," replied the pasha, with the utmost courtesy. "There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet."

"Islamism, however, you must own, has had its day. You no longer believe in its precepts; and the proof is you drink wine."

"Mahomet," replied the pasha—"whose name be thrice blessed—aware of the miseries caused by an excess in the use of the juice of the grape, has sought to preserve his followers from its fatal effects, without, at the same time, entirely proscribing a beverage which, taken in moderation, strengthens the body, enlivens the heart, and attunes it to the delightful passion of love."

"And, suiting the action to the word, the pasha tossed off a glass of champagne."

"I admit this tolerance," rejoined my aunt; "but why not extend it to women? Does not the seclusion to which you condemn them display evidences of a state of things—excuse my frankness—in the last degree barbarous? You speak of love. Now, allow me to ask, can this passion exist in a land where the dignity of my sex is so little respected?"

"What you term seclusion, O Rose of England, is for them leisure: the liberty of doing all that they desire. We cover them with a veil, it is true, when they walk abroad, but it is to preserve their complexions from the rays of a too ardent sun. The beauty of women is as the blossom of the jessamine, which the heat of day, alas! too quickly withers; it is a gift of Allah, which, like all his gifts, we are enjoined most preciously to preserve."

"My aunt was determined not to be beaten, and accordingly returned to the charge again."

"You sacrifice," she said, "all this to beauty; in your eyes the gifts and graces of the mind are counted as nought. Where, may I ask, are those arts which shed such

lustre on the female mind—music, painting, poetry, dancing? Are they, I say, even known in your serails?"

"The pasha,* without replying, clapped his hands, and forthwith a heavy curtain which had hitherto concealed the lower portion of the room was drawn aside, and two women clad in the Eastern costume appeared before my aunt. One of them held in her hands a guitar, the other a silken scarf. At the first chords struck by her companion the fair dancer unfurled her scarf and let it float from her pennonwise in the air; then she would bound forward, as if to recover the silken banner; anon she would make it describe all sorts of graceful evolutions, sometimes waving like a streamer, at others forming rainbow-like curves of the most graceful nature; again she would recover it, and cause it to twine in snaky folds around her form, all her attitudes during this performance exhibiting the very poetry of motion. The notes which meanwhile proceeded from the guitar, by turns gentle and loud, lively and sad, plainly showed that its chords were swept by a skilful hand: the melody was on a par with the dance. The pasha, carried away by his enthusiasm, clapped his hands loudly, giving utterance to certain sounds equivalent to "Bravo, Delight of the Eyes!" "Bravissimo, Torment of the Heart!" for these, it would appear, were the names of the fair ladies in question.

"To these two succeeded another pair, equally beautiful and equally accomplished. One presented my aunt with a little drawing of a rose, which she professed to have executed with her own hands; the other, being neither musician, painter, nor dancer, recited for my aunt's edification a *ghazel*, which I shall not inflict upon you, for the simple reason that I do not know what a *ghazel* is; but, according to my aunt's account, it was something prodigiously fine. In the midst of all these amusements some friends of the pasha dropped in to spend the evening with him. Coffee and pipes were served; the pasha's

ladies—rather nice girls I should say, by all accounts—joined the party, took their share of the refreshments, and entered into conversation with the guests with the utmost unconcern. My aunt was not a little astonished at all this, and, if the truth must be told, somewhat annoyed. She sat perfectly quiet, looking at what was going on, but without uttering a word. This silence on my aunt's part was evidently respected by the pasha, out of courtesy, no doubt; but my aunt said he would give her a look now and then out of the corner of his eye, and she fancied she could occasionally perceive a slight smile partially concealed under his thick black mustachios. Depend upon it the scamp was laughing at her.

After a while the guests rose from table and adjourned to the gardens, where they amused themselves by sauntering about in groups amid the odorous shrubs and flowers. The pasha led my aunt to a kiosk surrounded by orange-trees in full blossom.

"Well, Pearl of the West," he began, "are we still insensible to the charms which elevate and adorn your sex? and do you still think us jealous?"

"My aunt was rather taken aback by this, and scarcely knew what to reply; fortunately she was saved the trouble, for at that moment a tremendous row was heard in the house; armed slaves, carrying lighted torches, were seen scouring like mad through the gardens, jostling each other and shouting as if the place was on fire.

"What's the row?" exclaimed the pasha. "Halloa there, some one!"

A black slave—a remarkably fat old fellow—appeared.

"Impenetrable buckler," he began, "Well of Wisdom, Pillar of Strength—"

"Enough, enough!" shouted the pasha, "answer me directly, what means all this tumult?"

"Oh, pasha!" stammered out the fat fellow, "the slave you purchased three months ago, that cost you twenty purses, Nejema, the fair Nejema—oh!"

"What of her, is she ill—dead?"

"Oh, no, pasha; worse than that—she has run away!"

"Run away!"

"With a young Greek, and a lot of your silver spoons."

"Ha! let her be pursued," screamed the pasha in a fury, "and as for you fellows, I shall have every mother's son of you impaled if you don't produce the girl and her accomplice by to-morrow morning."

The fat negro bowed thrice, and retired, as quickly as his *emboupoint* would permit, swearing by Allah that he would execute his master's orders.

This little incident, as may be imagined, put a premature end to the evening's entertainments; and my aunt was conducted in great state to her bedroom, where a confidential slave was in waiting to attend upon her.

The fury which flashed from the eyes of the pasha, coupled with the awful threats he made use of, would have furnished my aunt with a very pretty occasion of taking her revenge on the civilization question, but the Turk hadn't given her time.

"What will become of Nejema, if they catch her?" inquired she of the old slave as she was undressing.

This old woman, who had served at Alexandria, in the families of several European merchants, replied to her in the English language.

"They will cast her into a pit full of rats," she said.

"How very shocking!" exclaimed my aunt.

"Unless, indeed, they sew her up in a sack and throw her into the sea."

"Dear, dear!" murmured my aunt.

"To-morrow," said my aunt to herself, "my vengeance will be complete. Ah! ha! Mr. Pasha, I have caught you this time in an act of the grossest barbarity. To consign a poor woman to the rats! In this single act, the man, evidently devoid of every species of civilization, displays himself. But I will prevent this abomination. My mission demands it as a duty. I now see that my presence in the East

will bear happy fruits. Yes, I will save you, O fair yet frail Nejema! while, at the same time, I shall prove to this pasha that he is nothing better than a vile barbarian."

"My aunt's first thought on awaking in the morning was to ask if they had caught the fair Nejema."

"Alas! yes," replied the old slave.

"Run at once to the pasha!" exclaimed my aunt, "there's not a moment to be lost."

The old slave started off as she was bidden, and soon returned with a message that the master of the house was ready to receive her.

During the night a total change seemed to have taken place in the appearance of her host; his dishevelled beard and rolling eyes, the paleness of his complexion, and his generally "rumpled" look, struck the heart of my aunt with dismay. To tell the truth, she began to feel her courage giving way.

This little weakness, however, lasted but for a moment; hastily invoking the aid of the goddess of her idolatry—Lady Hester Stanhope—and drawing strength from her devotion to the cause of Eastern civilization, she felt her courage revive, and she advanced towards the pasha with a firm and assured step.

"Has the night passed happily for my noble guest?" inquired the pasha, courteously.

"No," replied my aunt.

"The songs of the bulbul have perhaps disturbed her slumbers?"

"No."

"Had the Pearl of the West perchance heard the footsteps of some evil djinn?"

The Pearl of the West hadn't heard anything in the shape of a djinn.

"What, then, is the matter with the Rose of England?"

"Why, that you are a monster!" cried the Rose of England.

"I!" exclaimed the pasha, not for a moment losing his temper.

"Yes, you. I heard last night the voice of the fair Nejema crying to me to save her; you must grant me her pardon."

"Never!" exclaimed the pasha.

"You refuse my request!"

"Every woman, surprised with a gjaour, dies the death."

"This is your final determination then?" said my aunt.

"The prophet has decreed it; the law condemns her."

"But this law which you fear not to violate for your own indulgencies, will you not violate it to show mercy and forgiveness?"

"This was a home thrust for the pasha, and my aunt thought she had him, but the beggar shuffled out of it."

"No mercy!" he exclaimed, adroitly avoiding my aunt's question. "This evening she dies."

"You will dare to cast her into the pit of rats! Barbarian!" cried my aunt.

"With a cat in each sack," continued the pasha with a grin.

"Monster!"

"I don't mind throwing a snake or two into the bargain if you particularly wish it."

"Tremble, tyrant!" exclaimed my aunt, in her most melodramatic tones. "All Europe shall hear of your conduct."

"The law ordains it; but should you prefer it, I will commute her sentence into drowning; I will have them both sewn up in sacks and thrown into the sea."

"The tyrant didn't care a fig for all Europe; my aunt then changed her plan of attack. "Have pity!" she cried, casting herself at the pasha's feet.

"Neither mercy nor pity! She must die; and by Allah! she shall die, and I am now, with your permission, about to give directions respecting the execution."

So saying, the pasha retired, leaving my aunt a prey to the most violent rage. She spent all the rest of the day in seeking her tyrannical host; but he was nowhere to be found. She learned, however, from the old slave, that the execution would take place at nightfall.

In the course of the afternoon my aunt received a polite note from the pasha, stating that, as he thought she might probably be desirous of witnessing an Eastern execution, he had given orders that the Greek should be impaled. "I

shall be charmed," he wrote, in conclusion, "to do anything that may be agreeable to you; I kiss your gazelle-like feet!"

"My aunt was furious; "to dare to offer her the spectacle of a man being impaled! Have I not then power," she cried, "to bend this inflexible will? to soften this tiger's heart! Holy love of civilization, can you not inspire me? I will this evening make one last effort, and if that proves unavailing, I will devote the monster to the execration of humanity."

"Towards evening, the old slave came to inform her that the pasha had just ascended the platform overlooking the sea, doubtless to enjoy the sight of the execution. Thither she ran, as fast as her legs could carry her, and grasped a firm hold of the pasha's robe. "Stop, stop!" she cried, "in the name of civilization!"

"But it would appear she was too late, for by the first glimmering of moonlight, a boat, rowed by two men, might be seen gliding stealthily out from the shadow of the land. The next instant the sound produced by the fall of a heavy substance into the water was heard, another similar sound followed, and all was still. This was too much for my aunt, she fainted right away; as for the pasha, he went off laughing.

"When my aunt came to her senses, she found herself in her own room, with the old slave standing by her side. She looked out of her window at the sea; all was calm.

"A few moments afterwards the pasha was announced. At the sight of this man my aunt could not repress a shudder: the pasha laughed.

"Did I not play my part to admiration?" he began.

"And you call that playing a part?" groaned my aunt.

"Confess, now, that you found me terribly Turkish. I must have been superb when refusing to spare the life of the fair and frail Nejema, wasn't I?"

"Poor, unhappy girl!" sighed my aunt.

"Don't be alarmed," said the pasha, quietly; "do you know where she is now?"

"At the bottom of the sea, I presume," replied my aunt.

"Not a bit of it," said the pasha; "she is safe on the opposite coast."

"But those sacks?"

"Were full of earth; I set the pair at liberty on condition that they would return the spoons and never set foot in my territory again; not a very hard condition you must allow. Will you, then, still consign me to the execration of mankind?"

"But why not have pardoned them openly?"

"Because it was necessary to inspire a salutary terror in the minds of those who might be tempted to follow her example. It wouldn't do to let these young Greeks imagine that they can carry off our Circassians whenever they have a mind."

"Shocking!" exclaimed my aunt.

"Shocking as much as you please," said the pasha; "but Circassians are very scarce now-a-days, and cost a lot of money. You see, Pearl of the West, we have wives that deceive us, just like European ones, and we pardon them; tell me, can we possibly show a greater mark of civilization than this? Now take my advice and renounce your project of civilizing the Turks; it is an impossibility."

"And why so, if you please?"

"For the simple reason that there are no Turks."

"But what are you, then?"

"A Parisian Turk, very much at your service. My name is Oscar Coquenard; I formerly held a commission as lieutenant of Zouaves. Having retired from the French service, I came to Egypt, and entered that of the viceroy, in which I was soon promoted to a pashalik—I am now Boski Pasha—all my colleagues are English, French, Germans, and Italians. I haven't seen a Turk since I have been in the country."

"My aunt renounced the Lady Hester Stanhope idea, and the very next day started with her whole cavalcade for Alexandria, where she embarked at once for Southampton."

"Halloa!" exclaimed Jack, looking at his watch, "two o'clock, by Jove! Good-night, old fellow."—G. J. K.

TO BE LET, WITH IMMEDIATE POSSESSION.



ing house myself. I weighed the matter over very carefully in my own mind, that place where everybody is supposed to keep a nicely-adjusted balance and correct weights, and resolved that I would without further delay take a house—a small one—just large enough for myself, and which I would constitute my castle, according to the approved notions of Britons, who object to being slaves upon philharmonic principles.

Now I have no long tale in store, of how I was bothered by furniture-dealers, and ironmongers, and carpet-men, and upholsterers, and all the locusts that cover the superficial area of an empty house, because I was fortunate enough to see an advertisement of a neat villa residence, only recently furnished. The tenant was, 'for satisfactory reasons,' about to go abroad, and he wished to meet with an eligible successor, willing to take the furniture at a valuation. I wrote to P. Q., that being the designation given in the advertisement, and upon being politely requested to call at No. 14, Finch Villas, Wobbler Road, I did call. I looked over the establishment, and felt it my duty as a tenant in prospective to grumble a little, and to keep up a constant fire of objections of all sorts directed against the house, the situation, the furniture—in short, against everything. Being opposed by P. Q., and Mrs. P. Q., and by an elderly lady, whom, I concluded, from what I have read of the species in novels, to be the mother of Mrs. P. Q., I was fairly beaten out of my stronghold, and forced into the possession of that of P. Q. The valuation was duly made by a gentleman, who, I was informed, was an entire stranger to the lessor. If I happened some time afterwards to see the lessor and the valuer in convivial companionship, I suppose I must date the intimacy as *subsequent* to my interview with P. Q. It is immaterial to what I have to say to notice how much the valuation amounted to; I paid it, as per agreement; and when the time came for me to take possession, I jumped into a cab, and drove straight from my lodgings to 'my new house.'

Going into one's own house for the first time in one's life, generally happens under peculiar circumstances, and is, directly or indirectly, associated with bride-cake and wedding-favours. There is a sort of glow in the sensations we experience upon entering our home—the home that is to be shared with the

'Dearer one still than all other.'

N admiring public will naturally be anxious to know who and what I am, and I will meet the anxiety by at once confessing that my name is Smith, and that I am a bachelor. Having no matrimonial desires or intentions, it will not be necessary for me to enter into any statement such as might be called for by a commissioner in bankruptcy, or a legion of ogre-minded creditors.

For many years I have been in the habit of living alone, and I have consequently undergone the various tortures to which those who live alone are subjected; I mean, in the way of lodgings. And when my last landlady died, as she did very hurriedly, and without giving me the slightest notice, I thought I would try the experiment of keep-

which
attem
oblivi
damp
and
dawn
until
longe
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ing of
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gratifi
house
in get
lookin
posse
plianc
ventu
more
speak
perha
able
press
enoug
but
and
chang
I d
be b
for i
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bour
gentl
empl
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Villa
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which a bachelor cannot, of course, attempt to realize. There is an obliviousness to wall-papers; and damp mortar, broken window-cords, and insecure chimneys will not dawn upon returning consciousness until the new house has become no longer new. With me the impressions of new-born tenancy were rather prosaic than otherwise; and I felt no enthusiasm worth speaking of, even when I arrived at the grand climacteric of putting my toes on my own fender in front of my own fire. I was sufficiently gratified to know that I was in a house without unnecessary bother in getting there—that it was a nice-looking house and comfortable, and possessed of all those modern appliances without which no builder ventures to approach a mortgagee; moreover, it was cheap. I am speaking of first impressions; and, perhaps, if I were not an unreasonable sort of being, my first impressions might have lasted long enough for me to get used to them; but I am not a reasonable being, and my impressions underwent a change.

I do not know why villas should be built with thin partition walls, for it is certainly no advantage to the tenants. My next-door neighbour, on the north side, was a gentleman who had some official employment, and a very large family. I lived near to him sufficiently long to know that the population tables are subject to rapid alterations. His good lady, as he termed the partner of his bosom, had made him happy a short time before I went to reside at Finch Villas, as the little stranger painfully assured me through the wall at all hours of the night. Its official papa was kind enough to allude to the circumstance one morning as we went down the road together. 'It was,' as he said, 'getting on, and would soon cease being so troublesome; it was its teeth.' But it did get on, and made life hideous in spite of its teeth. And when I fondly hoped it was arriving at months of discretion, a strange commotion and excitement, and a hurrying to and fro of frowzy old women,

servants, and doctors, warned me that the prerogative to squeal was about to be claimed by another pledge of affection.

On the other side lived a couple of ladies—will they forgive me if I say that they were *not* young? I did not think it possible that I could ever destroy the *entente cordiale* which I believed existed between us. Unluckily I one night—it was in the depth of winter—had a fire lighted in the grate in my bedroom. It would not burn as it ought to have done, and required constant stirring and poking up. The next morning, a rather stiffish note informed me that I was to be indicted as a nuisance; that I had thumped away at my bedroom wall all night long; that they were sure I was carrying on coining, or some other equally dreadful pursuit; and that I should be handed over to the police. Upon the principle which leads to the multiplication of disasters, the same day my dog Snap, a bull-terrier, discovered that my fair neighbours possessed a small Italian greyhound, and Snap very nearly made a dinner of it. Then their pet canary got loose, and flying off the window-sill, fell into my water-butt, and was drowned. Several other little disagreeables occurred to mar our neighbourhood, until all the residents on the south side of number fourteen became impressed with the one steadfast idea that I was a brute, and a disgrace to Wobbler Road.

Somebody circulated a report that I was a Mormon: it originated with the greengrocer's shop, I think, and arose through my having expressed a desire to pay for my supplies as they were ordered, in preference to having them 'booked.'

These were annoyances of which I was the cause, but there were others of which I was the victim. Wobbler Road had houses on both sides, and at a house precisely opposite to mine, lived a gentleman who was in the habit of frequently publicly expressing an opinion that he would not go home till morning. I grieve to say that he was not at all times competent to decide the matutinal problem as to when 'daylight doth

appear.' Whether this was his reason for arousing the neighbourhood, in order that he might be assisted to a solution, I do not know; but I do know that I was invariably made aware of his intention not to go home until the daylight did appear. The brilliant idea occurred to me to charter the policeman of the beat to quiet the gentleman, and to hurry him up to his house and indoors with all despatch, on such nights as the morning declarations were stronger than usual. This ingenious but expensive course answered very well until it happened one night that a new policeman had been put on duty. I have reason to remember that night, having been suffering from an excruciating attack of *tic-doloreux*. At about two A.M., I distinguished through the broken chorus of 'Dixie' the arrival of my bacchanalian friend. I rolled the bed-clothes round my head to shut out the noise, but could still distinctly hear him wish he 'was in Dixie,' a wish I was not slow to echo. The din gradually bore down Wobbler Road, and at last anchored under my window. A ran-tan at the door—my door! What is he knocking there for? I thought to myself. Knock, knock! A knock that I am sure would have wakened Duncan, had that ill-used monarch lain where I did. I waited a little, until the knocking recommenced to the tune of 'In the Strand.' In an agony of pain from my face, I threw up the window, and demanded to know the cause of the disturbance.

'Hallo, old cock! letsh in, will you?'

'Go away, do, you are at the wrong door,' and I banged the window down.

After the lapse of a few minutes the knocking continued, having veered round to the popular melody

'I'm a young man from the country,
But you don't get over me!'

I opened the window, and called out to the self-confessed 'young man' to go away, or I would call the police.

'Call the pleesh,' said he, 'come, thatsh a good un! Call the pleesh

when a chap wants to get into his own housh!'

'This is not your house,' I said; 'your house is opposite.'

'O, my housh is op-(hic)-opposite, is it; where old Snap-dragon and the bull-terrier live?' and he struck up in a hoarse brandy-cracked voice

'You don't get over me!'

To be called out of my warm bed at that unseemly hour, and to be addressed to my face as old Snap-dragon, was not calculated to soothe my feelings, so I shouted police! as lustily as I could; and after some time, and a considerable amount of knocking and melody on the part of the gentleman below, the policeman arrived, to whom I briefly explained the circumstance, and then jumped into bed.

An animated discussion now ensued. The inebriated serenader informed the policeman in a strictly confidential tone of voice that he lived on the right-hand side of Wobbler Road, exactly opposite to the lamp.

'Left-hand side, you mean,' said the policeman.

'No, right-hand shide.'

'You must be wrong.'

'No, I tell you, Bobby—I beg pardon—I should say offisher, itsh the right-hand shide; right-hand shide, exactly op-opposite to the lampsh.'

And so the policeman, apparently convinced, as an 'officer,' that my torturer was right, and very probably imputing malicious motives to me for keeping the gentleman out, made another vigorous onslaught on the knocker.

While listening to the conversation, the truth began to dawn upon my mind that my musical friend was right in a degree, for he had been in the constant habit of coming up Wobbler Road from the north end, whereas he had, in this exceptional instance, come in at the south end, so that what was at other times the right-hand side of the road, happened, on this particular occasion, to be the left. The lamp was, it was true, opposite to both houses. In this view of the ques-

tion I again parleyed with the besiegers, and had the satisfaction to see my friend hauled off by the policeman, though very much against his will, and amid many threats of an investigation at Scotland Yard. The banging of a door, and the faint echo of 'Good night, Bobby!' convinced me that silence might again reign supreme.

Being of a quiet turn of mind, it was sufficiently evident that I had made a wrong choice in selecting Finch Villas as a residence; and therefore, after having been the tenant of number fourteen a little over fourteen months, I advertised the house 'To be let, with immediate possession.'

THE PERI OF THE PAVILION.

A Romance of 1863.

FYTTE YE FIRST.

NAPOLEON the First made a droll observation,
'The English are only a shopkeeping nation.'
And between me and you
The great man of St. Cloud

In stating the fact, clearly proved that he knew
Of us and our habits a slight thing or two;
For he meant to assert (what is perfectly true),
That whate'er be the object we chance to pursue,

When we buy or we sell,
Build a church or hotel;
When we speak, read, or write,
Make a treaty or fight,
Dine, breakfast, or sup,
Go to bed or get up,
Insure a friend's life,
Choose a horse or a wife—

In whatever we say, or whatever we do,
We always take care to keep *business* in view.
As an instance which fully bears out what I say,
When after ten months of hard work and no play,
Summer brings the vacation holiday,
We buy knapsacks and gaiters, pack up, go away,
And prepare for three weeks or a month to be gay;
But we even do *this* in a business-like way.

So like my countrymen did I,
One Monday morning last July,
Lay briefs and law-books all aside,
Calmly to study 'Bradshaw's Guide.'
A work which is (as Pope observes of man),
'A mighty maze, but not without a plan.'

The thing I chiefly wished to know,
Was where on earth I ought to go;
For I had previously been through
All places that the tourists 'do.'
With Oxford friends (a college league), I
Had watched the sun rise on the Rhigi;
Had sipped the best of German wine,
At Oberwessel on the Rhine;
Had heard the echoes on Killarney,
Had kissed the far-famed stone of Blarney;

Ye First
Napoleon,
Hys exceed-
ing great
sagacity.

Ye English
of y^e period;
their cha-
racter.

Ye poet pre-
pareth to
take hys
pleasaunce
abroad.

He bothynk-
eth him of
hys former
travels.

How he had
roamed
through
divers far
countries,

He wisteth
not what to
do.

Had stood on Snowdon's summit drear,
And smoked my pipe on Windermere;
At Harrowgate, and Kissengen,
Drank sulphuretted hydrogen.
Explored the Seine, Garonne, and Loire,
In Homburgh played at rouge et noir;
Admired Old Scotia's mountain torrents,
And seen the Niobe at Florence.
So you may guess I was perplexed,
As to what spot I'd visit next;

When as I thought the matter o'er, my eye just chanced to
light on

This sentence in the Bradshaw,  ' Cheap Excursion Trains to
Brighton!'

I suddenly started right up off my chair;
' Ha! Brighton! How comes it I never was there,
The journey's not long, ten shillings the fare;
If I find the place slow,

I can easily go,

And to Cheltenham, Buxton, or Dover repair,
Biarritz where the Empress each day takes the air,
Aix la Chapelle, or Boulogne sur Mer.'

Finally
decideth,

Summoneth
y^e ancient
priestess of
y^e Temple,
and payeth
her.

Circum-
venteth the
railway
company,
and jour-
neyeth unto
Brighton.

Having made up my mind, in my chambers I stayed,
Till I called in my laundress, a virtuous maid,
Who the last fifty years has followed the trade
Of washing the barristers' shirts; and mislaid
Very often my spoons, nay cribbed I'm afraid
My tea (but I now get my groceries weigh'd).
This aged domestic her wages I paid,
Then my way to the London Bridge terminus made,
The by-laws 'gainst smoking contrived to evade;
And lighting my meerschaum, was safely conveyed
To the end of my journey; then leisurely strayed
Through the town to the beach, and my figure displayed
Mid the loungers who throng'd the Esplanade.

HERE ENDETH FYTTE Y^e FIRST.

FYTTE Y^e SECOND.

About five o'clock that day I saw a stream of people flowing
All in one way, and wondered much to what place they were
going;

He wendeth
hys way
unto y^e
Pavilion.

I met and asked a 'horsey' man, half jockey half postilion,
And he answered, 'To a band as plays to-day at the Pavilion.'
So off to the band I determined to go,
As perhaps I'd see somebody whom I might know.

The gardens were so crowded, that scarcely could I move,
And through a sea of crinoline to make way vainly strove,
While the band of the 16th Slashers, were playing 'The Power
of Love.'

Is astonied,

Two hours went by, I prepared to depart
And was steering out—when I got a start
That sent the blood in a rush from my heart
To my head, which at once commenced to swim;
My hair stood on end, and my eyes grew dim;
Then I grew so pale my own friends wouldn't know me,
Or (it from Virgil you'll allow me to quote),
'Obstupui steteruntque comae
Vox faucibus hæsit,' the words stuck in my throat.

On the whole I felt uncommonly queer,
And the why and the wherefore you'll presently hear.

A woman passed beside me,
She touched me with her dress;
And never yet did poet dream
By forest oak or mountain stream
Of greater loveliness.
As the neck of Annie Laurie
Hers was 'like the swan,' and on it,
A flood of golden glory
Streamed from underneath her bonnet.

by reason of
an angel
who appear-
eth unto
him,

Now I'm sure you'll agree

In saying with me,

It's very few *angels* we anywhere see,
In this year eighteen hundred and sixty-three;

I suppose the proportion is one to the million,

But I looked on that *one* in the Brighton Pavilion:

And not being accustomed to beings celestial

It's not odd that I, a poor mortal terrestrial,

At the heavenly sight

Should be dumbfounded quite.

And howe'er you may sneer, I fancy you might,

Had you seen her just been in the very same plight.

She leaned upon the arm of one who seemed long past his prime, She hath a companion.

His hair was gray, and his face was tanned as if by an Indian
clime,

Quite 'A fine old English gentleman one of the olden time.'

As soon as I came to myself again

I endeavoured to keep them in sight but in vain;

We got into a crush at the entrance door

And somehow or other I saw them no more!

Then I turned my weary feet

To my hotel to dine,

But oh! I could not eat

Nor at all enjoy my wine.

I sipped my claret and ate a peach,

Then wandered (like Alp) 'along the beech';

Dundrearies were there by the score, and each

Wore whiskers that down to their shoulders did reach;

(You may see their portraits in 'Punch' by Leech.)

Backwards and forwards I paced on the strand,

While the waves rippled lazily up on the sand;

Sometimes I'd walk, and sometimes I'd stand,

And each girl that passed me on either hand,

(Especially the *fair* ones), I eagerly scanned,

And all the old men whose faces were tanned;

But I ne'er saw the angel I had met at the band.

So with anxious heart and aching head,

I regained the hotel and went to bed.

But all that horrible night I declare,

I dreamt of nothing but golden hair;

Wigs made of it seemed to lie on the chair,

On the floor, on the table, in short everywhere.

Methought I went up in a balloon,

With Glaisher, on purpose to visit the moon;

But discovered upon arriving there

'Twas one globular mass of golden hair;

Sailed off to Australia, but to my despair

Was drowned in an ocean of golden hair;

Night com-
eth on, and
strange
dreams
scent
golden hair
visit y^r
poet.

Took a ticket for London, but when asked for the fare,
 Found nought in my pocket but golden hair;
 Was tried for attempting to stab the Lord Mayor,
 And hanged with a rope of golden hair!
 Then all the women golden-haired of whom
 I had ever read in poets or romancers,
 Came trooping in, and when they'd filled the room,
 First had a waltz, and then commenced the Lancers;
 From Spartan Helen, long since gone to Hades,
 Whom the smooth-tongued Trojan from her home decoyed,
 Down to those extremely interesting ladies—
 My Lady Audley and Aurora Floyd.

Though I cannot describe it in stanzas so fine,
 Tennyson's '*Dream of Fair Women*' was nothing to mine.

But at last it was o'er,
 Nothing troubled me more,
 Till I heard at the door,

Some one call out 'Please, sir, the hot water—it's nine.'

He deter-
 mineth to
 see the
 damsel
 again,
 and to
 follow her
 with the
 stratagem of
 Childe
 Hawkshaw.

I got up, had my breakfast, and puzzled my brain
 How I might see the golden-haired beauty again,
 For I swore to see her whate'er might betide;
 Woo her, and win her, and make her my bride.
 My resolute purpose fate shouldn't balk. Pshaw!
 I'd follow her like detective Hawkshaw,

Whom (when after a thief) no dangers could quail, or
 Successfully baffle, for when once on the trail, or

Having got the least clue,
 His man he'd pursue,

And the cleverest burglar hand o'er to the gaoler:
 See '*The Ticket of Leave Man*,' a play by Tom Taylor.
 Having come to this determination,
 On the Esplanade I took my station;
 When as sure as a gun,
 About half-past one,

Espyeth her
 y^e next day
 on the
 Esplanade.

Both father and daughter I happened to meet,
 As on one of the benches they were taking a seat;
 That bench for an hour or more I stood nigh,
 And once or twice fancied *I'd caught her eye*.

When they stood up to go,
 I watched them, and lo!

She drop-
 peth her
 kerchief,

Imagine my feelings of joy, to find
 Her handkerchief, she had left behind.
 Hurrah! I had triumphed, 'twould afford a pretence
 For speaking to them without giving offence.

which he
 picketh up,

I snatched up the treasure, upon it was seen
 Most carefully worked in the corner '*L. GREEN*.'
 So Green was her surname, but what did '*L.*' mean?

Did it stand for Letty, Lotty, Linda, Lucy, or Louisa,
 Lavinia, Leonora, Laura, Lillian, or Lisa?

But no time in conjecture was to be spent

and giveth
 unto the
 old man.

So after them both I immediately went;
 At length I o'ertook them, and thinking it rather
 The best course to take, I spoke first to the father.

Dolorous
 and tragical
 discoverie.

'Your daughter's, I think, sir.' With a manner polite
 He looked at it first, then said, 'Thanks, it's all right;
 But you never made a greater mistake in your life,
 Than to call her my daughter. Why, sir, she's my WIFE.'

HERE ENDETH FYTTE Ist SECOND.

FYTTE YF THIRD AND LAST.

Vanish'd the dream! dissolved the spell!
I paid my bill at the hotel:
With tottering step and aching heart
Prepared from Brighton to depart;

Y^e poet
much dis-
traught,

Caught the 3:30 train,
And weighed down with my weight of woe,
In that sad journey did not know
Whether the train went fast or slow;
Whether I was by myself or no,

A mist hung o'er my brain,
As prostrate by the cruel blow

returneth
unto y^e
great citie.

I came to town again.
That was the middle of the year,
And now the bleak December's here

With winter's frost and rain.
Yet time has not my grief removed,
True to her memory I have proved;
I only feel that I have loved,

Have loved, but loved in vain!
And knowing this can ne'er be gay,
Or as the laureate might say:

Hys present
pitiful con-
dition.

I rave not madly at my lot,
Nor curse her husband, let him go
Henceforth in peace; I only know
That I am here, and she is not!

And brooding on that truth forlorn,
Keep vigil through the dreary night,
Till out of darkness glimmers light,
The cold gray dawn of early morn.

That cherub face, that golden hair,
I seem to see them everywhere;
For her phantom it haunts me wherever I go,
Like 'the raven' of Edgar Allen Poe.

And that phantom ne'er receding, while I'm sleeping, waking,
feeding,
Thinking, smoking, talking, reading, peereth at me from the
door;

E'en as madly now I write on, hoping thus my grief to lighten,
Stands that weird-like one of Brighton, like Pepper's ghost upon
the floor,

And in low sepulchral accents, saith that female on the floor
Thou shalt see me nevermore!

Y^e END.

H. M.



UP IN THE CLOUDS.

A TALE IN NINE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VI.

FOLLOWING up the hint which Miss Lestroppe had dropped in the morning, I had snugly secreted myself at the bottom of the car, and was covered with cloaks and sundry articles, when I felt the tug and the snap of the rope which immediately preceded the balloon's escape. After that, I perceived no further shock or violence. I supposed that the balloon was freed from its moorings, and held down by men's hands, until my fellow-travellers should take their places in the car. But the music of the band suddenly died away, like the swell of an organ abruptly closed by the player. I heard a loud and confused murmur of voices rapidly hushed to a complete silence, which I fancied to be the breathlessness of expectation. But the silence soon became so absolute, and was moreover so long continued, that it alarmed me. Even at an execution, the stillness pervading the crowd at the last fearful moment would be briefer and less impressive.

I therefore cautiously peeped out from my concealment. Still the silence of death. The air struck sharp and chilly on my flushed cheeks and my heated frame. From the hollow of the car, wherein I lay crouching, nothing around me was any longer to be seen. The houses and the lofty trees which encircled the gardens were gone. The neighbouring steeple of St. Peter's Church, which I had beheld crowned with eager spectators, had utterly disappeared. I sat up; I rose; I stood in the car. I knelt, and ventured to look over the edge. I was an atom suspended in open space. I was a single living creature dangling on high in the midst of measureless solitude. Beneath me lay the city of Z—, with its cathedral, its churches, its streets, and its suburbs—a toy model of a town, such as we see exhibited in museums.

The fields were brightly-coloured patches dispersed over a wide-spreading velvet carpet; the woods and plantations, tufts and strips of verdant moss; the roads, lines of yellow thread; the river, a winding streak of blue floss silk. I could see all those things as distinctly as if I had been looking at them through a clear double-concave or diminishing glass. There was a brilliancy about their minuteness which reminded me of gazing at the shells and seaweeds at the bottom of an excessively transparent pool left in the rocks by the retiring tide. The truth flashed upon me at once. The balloon had prematurely taken its flight, and had carried me away with it.

I dared to look again; the earth was now sinking rapidly, plunging deep into some fathomless abyss. In its descent it dragged the very firmament after it; the sky was fast falling down upon me, and became blacker and blacker as it approached me. I alone was motionless, fast fixed by a mighty spell to one unvarying point, while a cata-ract of clouds, a sea of vapour, poured down upon me in a colossal stream such as no fevered imagination ever dreamt of. The mighty misty torrent, however, was not inexhaustible or endless. I was enveloped in the current of downward drifting mist, when it suddenly stopped. Beneath me lay a cloudy ocean, still sinking. The earth had altogether disappeared. The sun shone brightly. Far overhead was a wide-spread flock of fleecy white clouds, apparently descending also, but much less rapidly than the others had done. And I was alone, beholding these things companionless! The whole awful panorama was so unlike terrestrial landscapes, that I had a difficulty in realizing it to my own mind as an actuality. I felt tempted to throw myself from

the car, as I would out of bed, to insure the waking from a dreadful nightmare.

But the idea of a nightmare was soon discarded. In our wildest dreams, the mind is mostly conscious of an internal monitor who tells us, 'This trouble will soon be over; fear it not seriously; don't take it too much in earnest; it is but a vision of the night.' Or, 'Enjoy that lovely landscape; listen to those enchanting strains; prolong your pleasure as much as you can. Do not awake until you are obliged to. You may have seen those scenes, you may have heard that melody before, in dreams, but never in your waking life. Revel, then, in the paradise of dreamland; it is a brief enjoyment which will soon pass away.'

In this case, there was no possibility of self-deception. Here was the reality, hard, rigid, and material. The wicker framework of the car which I grasped in my hand, the silken mass of the balloon enclosed in its stout network, the rays of the sun which comforted me by their warmth, my clothes, and the sundry articles amidst which I was nestled, imperiously impressed me with the reality of my strange situation. Even the clouds beneath me reared themselves upon their floating foundations in such well-defined masses as to preclude all notion of their belonging to the world of phantoms. They formed alpine peaks and mountain buttresses. They imitated icebergs, avalanches, glaciers, and piles of rocks, and beds of snow stretching out for many a league. The sun gilded their eminences and the projecting portions of their surface, while the hollows and recesses were marked by deep shade. The shadow of the balloon passing over them as they swept along gave the same apparent solidity to their forms as when we behold the shadow of a cloud coursing along the face of a cliff or sweeping up a mountain side. So heavy and substantial were they, that I could easily conceive a planet, a globe, composed of nothing but congregated clouds, and needing no firmer nucleus

within to entitle it to a place in the solar system.

Instead of lapsing into dreaminess, my mind was more alert than usual to note and observe all around me. In travelling, when we come upon some object renowned for its singularity or its grandeur, and on which we can only cast a hasty glance and then immediately continue our route—such as a mighty cascade, a deep and labyrinthine cavern, a narrow mountain pass, or a bird's-eye view of a country afforded by an elevated shelf of table-land; or when, in life, our destiny sets us face to face with some imposing or tragic event—a shipwreck, a fatal accident, a battle, a volcanic eruption, the deathbed of a beloved friend—we strain our faculties to drink in and photograph on our memory every detail of the picture. Just so was I wide awake to the fact of my being borne, in the flesh, far into the upper regions of the atmosphere, and vividly conscious that it was a position to be remembered hereafter. I felt anxiety and awe, but no paralyzing terror. An encouraging presentiment of deliverance, somehow, kept me from falling into despair.

'By some means, quite unknown, I must,' I thought, 'surely meet with a rescue. It is a long lane which has no turning. My fortunes, apparently now at the worst, must improve.' A good hope shining in the human breast is often the cause of the fulfilment of that hope. No immediate danger threatened. I could not believe that I was to die in this way—to perish slowly of cold and hunger, or to be suddenly extinguished, crushed by the fall to a shapeless mass of flesh and bones. Still such a death was possible. Icarus might be a fable; Pilatre de Rosier was an historical fact whose heart throbbed as violently as mine does now, not so very many years ago. 'What a death was his! Perhaps a suicide? May I be spared such a death, if only for my poor mother's sake! yes; I will try hard to live, and to reach the blessed earth again in safety.'

Where was I? Over what part of England was I hovering now? What had I beneath me; land or

sea, city or forest, mountain or marsh? Impossible to guess. The earth was submerged in a deluge of clouds. At present, therefore, all thought of descending must be relinquished. In my unpractised hands, the mere attempt might expose my life to great risk. I knew, indeed, that a certain rope was connected with the valve which allowed the gas to escape; but I had no experience of its action. By opening the valve too wide or keeping it open too long, I might easily so disturb the equilibrium of buoyancy as to precipitate the whole machine, a collapsed and falling wreck, to the ground. No; I must keep up for the present. I must do nothing, but endeavour to remain where I was, at least until the earth became visible.

I looked amongst the various things that lay around me in profusion in the car. One of them was a pocket compass. I had remarked, as a curious circumstance, that the sun appeared to revolve slowly round the balloon. A very little consideration enabled me to explain it, by supposing the balloon itself to be slowly revolving on its own axis. The compass confirmed me in this idea. While the sun apparently was going round the balloon, the compass steadily pointed to the west and with equal steadiness to the sun, which was gradually sinking towards the horizon. The anchor and its rope for mooring the balloon on its descent to the ground, had not been put into the car; but there were two bottles of wine, a silver cup, a corkscrew, a thermometer, bread and biscuits, cold meat, a knife, and other utensils and instruments. Of the solid objects, including the bottles, I took especial note, destining them, in my own mind, to be thrown out as ballast, in case the balloon lost its floating power too rapidly and threatened to drop me either into broad waters or upon the dangerous roofs of a town. At either end of the oval car, two baskets, with flat tops, which also served as seats, I knew to be heavily filled with ballast. Upon inspecting them, instead of the usual bags of sand, I found them filled with

bladders of some heavy liquid. If with water, what a resource! To be assured of the reality of this invaluable well in the midst of the desert, I untied the neck of a bladder, and tasted. Water it was. Thanks! thanks to Providence! There is one more glimpse of hope.

The light fleecy clouds never reached me. I wished they had, they looked so beautiful. They were an archipelago of snowy islets floating in a black-blue sea. While gazing upwards at them, a new sensation came over me—a peculiar sickness and faintness. There was a singing in my ears, and I gasped for breath. My fingers were swollen and blue, and a numbness, proceeding from them and from my feet, was gradually creeping over me. Unseen hands, whose thrusts I was unable to resist, planted icy daggers in every part of my frame. The very sun, now sinking fast towards the western horizon, instead of imparting any vital warmth, seemed himself to be sucking out the little vitality that was left in me. I felt no more. A leaden torpor paralyzed my senses. I became unconscious.

Had I died in that condition, I should have suffered what is called an easy death. I was awakened, first, by tingling pains, and then by a general sensation of soreness, as if I had been severely beaten. My brain felt as if some one had recently given me a violent blow on the head. I was oppressed by qualms, seasickness, headache, and thirst, which latter painful sensation I endeavoured to allay by profuse and improvident draughts of water from my store. I was also shivering with cold. On looking around, the sun was still low above the horizon; but on consulting the compass, he was in the east. If the compass spoke the truth, it must now be morning, and I must have passed the night in a swoon and its subsequent insensibility. A few minutes' observation confirmed the fact; the sun was evidently rising. His rays soon warmed me. I breathed more freely, I felt more at ease, and something within me told me that my elevation above the earth was less than it had been.

It suggested the hope that, by a gradual leakage of gas from the balloon, it might finally perhaps be gently deposited on the ground. It was a reason the more for patient endurance. Still, nothing was visible beneath me but a confused abyss of rolling vapours. Around, were floating masses of clouds protean in shape, for their outlines varied as the sun continued to rise. Sometimes they resembled a series of many-domed mosques built on a broad foundation; further off was an unbroken range, stretching out leagues and leagues in length, which resembled a whole alpine chain slowly moving along in space. Here and there mimic icebergs floated in the transparent air, until, under the sun's bright rays, they gradually faded into nothing.

While gazing down upon the misty sea, watching if it would not part to allow me a glimpse of terra firma, a vulgar and daily want made itself felt; I was conscious of the pangs of hunger. I again investigated my stores, and thankfully made a hearty meal off meat (of which there was plenty) and bread, (of which there was but little), and emptied another bladder, which afforded a delicious draught of water. All the empty bladders I distended with air and returned them to their place in the baskets. My stock of fluid was getting low, and yet I had need of a liberal supply. The dryness of the atmosphere had rapidly robbed me of every drop of moisture I had imbibed.

The repast ended, I looked out again. The sun had risen higher, and either his rays had gained greater strength, or I had sunk into a warmer stratum of air. I was almost hot; and soon the mists below me melted as if by enchantment. Some few of them formed themselves into masses which sailed away grandly overhead. Curiously enough, one cloud came forward from among the rest, as if deputed by them to welcome my entrance into their domain. This cloud attended me all day long; if it left the balloon for a while, it returned soon afterwards, until I began to feel a friendship for it, although not

quite so strong in intensity as Ixion's passion for his misty love. But the great body of vapour disappeared, as if dissolved in the tepid atmosphere, and unveiling a glorious sight beneath me—the verdant earth, beautifully striped with patches of green of various shades, and traversed by a mighty river whose course ran from east to west.

Yesterday's illusion was again repeated; it seemed as if the balloon and myself were motionless, occupying a fixed point in space, while every other object was in motion; only, this time, instead of sinking, terrestrial objects seemed to be coming to meet me. Things scarcely visible on the western horizon slid forwards, passed beneath me, and then disappeared beyond the eastern boundary of view. I interpreted the truth to be that the balloon was steadily travelling onwards in a direction from east to west.

In this way, we—the balloon and myself, attended by our pilot cloud—followed pretty nearly the course of the river. The air was particularly clear, and I was able to distinguish bridges across it and tributary streams running into it. Here and there were small towns on its banks, each with its steeple pointed upwards at me. The uprising of the mist likewise permitted not only sights but sounds to reach me. When the sun, according to the compass, was in the south, I distinctly heard the tinkling of bells wafted to me from various quarters and with different degrees of faintness. It was the sounding of noon in a Catholic country. The changed aspect of everything, the brighter effusion of light than I had ever seen before, the altered look of the earth's surface, told me at once that I was hovering over a foreign land.

But my gaze was earnestly directed westwards, to spy out what was coming next, when I beheld what could be no other than a vast outstretched mass of buildings, a city considerably larger than Z—, backed by a forest of masts and rigging; and, beyond all, a long streak of purplish blue ominously straight and horizontal. The city glided forward to meet me. As it

neared, bands of music, peals of bells, and salutes of cannon were audible. About half a mile to the south of the city, overlooking the sea, and crowning an eminence on a lofty cliff, stood a small white church, towards which a gaudy procession was streaming. But the colours blue and white were so predominant, both in the assemblage of banners and the clothes of the crowd, as to give to the whole a dull azure tint. Blue, I knew, was the Virgin's colour; they were celebrating, therefore, some festival in honour of the Virgin. The shipping were decorated with flags and pennons. Meanwhile, the dark purple stripe beyond the city neared, and widened, and showed itself unmistakably the ocean, opening its portals to welcome me, or rather its jaws to swallow me up. Had these devotees and pilgrims noticed the balloon? Had they any suspicion of my presence in the car, and of my fearful strait? I had no flag or other signal, so I made an attempt with a handkerchief which Miss Lestroppe had given me only two days ago, and which she herself had hemmed and marked with my initials. It was a large square of blue silk divided into four compartments by a cross of white, which was formed by two broad stripes running across it each way. Each blue compartment was studded with large white stars. I displayed it, holding it with outstretched arms from the edge of the car, as an insane appeal for help! But help! What help could reach me there? It was an imaginary straw of salvage clutched at by a drowning wretch. Had any one there a telescope or a spyglass at hand? For in a couple of minutes I beheld a movement in the crowd; it became more dense and sank down, as if kneeling or prostrate. After an interval—it seemed a long one—a confused murmur, as of shouts, reached me, with more clashing of bells, rolling of drums, braying of brass instruments, and firing of guns. Soon, all was melting away in the distance. No help was possible, even if they thought I wanted help; but not a few probably believed in a miracle,

others that some bold adventurer had improvised an aerial banner, to heighten the splendour of the fête by a striking and unexpected incident. I was now hanging over the ocean, with the continent of Europe fast retiring towards the east. I looked for my attendant friendly cloud. It had followed me no further than the church-crowned cliff, over which it still remained suspended, refusing to quit the shore, and leaving me to my impending fate.

Land was soon out of sight. Beneath me lay an enormous disk of waters, bounded by a hard, sharp, circumferential line. It might have been the earth in its infant state, before dry land had yet appeared. A few sailing-vessels—white specks sparsely scattered over its surface—were all that served to indicate motion. They showed that I was ever drifting westwards, a new Columbus in a frailer bark. From the same quarter the sun stared at me, low, swollen, angry, red. He would soon set; and I expected to have to watch his limb dipping behind the convexity of the sea, when there uprose stealthily a black and distant bank of cloud in whose bosom his light was extinguished. His last rays, glancing obliquely over the waves, seemed to show the sea as looking nearer. Was I imperceptibly subsiding, to meet an inevitable watery grave?

I had taken nothing all day long. In the morning I had been pinched by hunger; I now felt only unquenchable thirst. I emptied a bladder, and found it was the last. Depression for the first time seized me. I bade farewell to home, picturing my parents' grief and uncertainty. Emma Hugginson! A forward fool! Ah, Miss Lestroppe! you little dream of my hopeless condition! Ah, Adelaide Niedermeyer! could I but behold your quiet and intelligent face once more! But all—all are lost to me now, whether dearest friends or indifferent acquaintances!

It was nearly dark. With no further means of slaking thirst, I gave way to a current of despairing thought. If starvation must come

at last, what mattered it whether it reached me a day or two sooner or later? A lengthening of life would be only a lengthening of misery. Sudden death by drowning even is better than the prolonged torments of death by famine. The compass still says that I am hurrying westward; for the black cloud to the west is rushing hitherwards. Back to your place again, compass of evil augury! What's this packed beside it? A corkscrew! Of wine, sparingly tasted at home, I have here a whole bottle all to myself. A bumper, then! Capital wine! Another cupful! When criminals are left for execution, I have heard, they may have whatever they choose to call for. I call for another cup of wine—*Nunc est bibendum!*—and for another—and another!

A feverish sleep closed this solitary orgie. I dreamt that I was compelled to walk along a rope stretched from the top of Z—Cathedral to the ear of the captive balloon, in which Miss Lestroppe was waiting to receive me with open arms. I saw my parents in the crowd, but they did not seem to be aware of my perilous task. Emma Hugginson was there, making bows and scoffing grimaces at me. Some winged creature beside me supported me by the hand; its face was the face of Adelaide Niedermeyer. It conducted me safely along the rope, and gave me a kiss on the cheek as I fell into the car.

I awoke with a start, to find myself still really lying in the car. The kiss on the cheek was repeated. A warm breath surrounded me, and I heard what sounded like a sigh. Again that kiss!—a big drop of rain-water! Again the warm breath!—the westerly wind tempered by the Gulf Stream! its sighs, tidings whispered to the balloon that it was driving us back to land again! The day was breaking in the east. I caught the blessed rain-drops in the maintosh sheet, and swallowed them greedily and gratefully. Daylight! Land! Hope! Joy unutterable! Another draught of water, with breaking of bread and meat, accompanied by thanksgiving, to sustain exhausted strength, and

prepare for the next turn of the wheel of fortune.

Ever eastward, now, with black warm clouds and drenching showers, above, beneath, around. Sometimes, when enveloped in a cloud, it was so dark that the balloon could not be seen from the car. But I had been swept back to the continent; and lo! my friendly body-guard, the cloud, once more resumed his attendance. As an assurance of my return to land, mountain-range after mountain-range, seen only at intervals, came from the east to welcome me, and then vanished. They even then called me, when I could not see them. A peal of thunder rolled; and then they tossed the sound from one to the other, like Titans playing at catchball with the elements. The forests below growled indistinctly; there was a rushing sound of many waters; there was a great storm, on the surface of which I was swimming, all that day and all that night.

With the next day's dawn came a chilly blast, mingled with fast-falling flakes of snow. The whirlwind and the tempest were over, and the steady wind was carrying me rapidly over the plain, leaving behind me gigantic mountains to the north. The balloon was drifting low through the murky twilight, almost threatening to graze the highest tree-tops. Icicles and snow hung to the cordage, all of which was sodden with rain. On, and on, till a silver line on the horizon which advanced towards me, and was marked south by the compass, disclosed my advance to the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean Sea did come. I was hanging over it, but followed the skirts of a picturesque and lovely coast. I was so low in the air that I could see the great aloes growing on the shore, and the olive-trees studded over the slopes, and the white waves breaking against the rocks. I could make out the rigging of the vessels that were plying at no great distance from the shore. My resolution was taken. Now, or never; neck or nothing. The sun will soon rise, I thought; will dry the cordage,

rarity the gas, and cause the balloon to mount again. I shall be carried out to the open sea; or, crossing it, to the wilds of Africa. Better to risk here a chance of escape with life, than to incur torture and mutilation at the hands of savage Arabs, or fall into the clutches of cannibal negroes.

One, yes, just one cup of wine before the final plunge can do no harm. I took off my shoes and other heavy clothing, leaving them at the bottom of the car, and retaining only my blue-striped cotton shirt, my blue cloth trousers, and my blue worsted socks. The money in my netted purse (one shilling and sixpence only, a schoolboy's treasure) was so trifling in weight as not to need discarding: I strung the empty full-blown bladders to my handkerchief, which I then tied round me beneath my arms and encircling my chest. I looked down again at the sea, and tried to persuade myself that it lay not very far below. I knelt in the car and said a short heartfelt prayer. And then instantly, fearing that a moment's delay might bring with it doubt and hesitation, I climbed over the car and hung by my hands to its outside edge, with my feet crossed together as they dangled in the air. Once more I thought of home and the possibility of revisiting it, to steel my nerves. I drew one deep inspiration. I closed my eyes, and let go. The car slipped instantly from my hold, and was gone. Of it, or of the balloon, I never saw anything more.

CHAPTER VII.

The instant that my hands loosened their grasp of the edge of the car, I instinctively clapped them to my face, covering with one my mouth and nostrils, and with the other my eyes and forehead. There was a rushing in my ears, and a few seconds' suspense, which doubtless appeared to my overstrained faculties double or triple its real length. Then came, not, as I feared, a stunning blow, but a deep plunge, as of an arrow shot into the depths of the sea. The sudden immersion

was a shock to my frame from its coolness rather than its resistance. I held in my breath manfully, remembering what divers after pearls are capable of doing. The waters of the Mediterranean are denser, and therefore more buoyant than those of the ocean. The deep inspiration I had taken, aided by my apparatus of bladders filled with air, soon brought me to the surface, where I lay panting and struggling like a wounded dolphin.

The shore was not far distant—some half-mile at the very outside—and I was endeavouring to reach it by swimming, when I noticed that a small vessel was tacking about and making for me. It was one of the coasters which ply with merchandise between the Italian and the African ports, and had evidently witnessed my fall in the sea, and the subsequent ascent of the balloon with its empty car. As she steered round me cautiously, I could read on her stern her name 'LA MADONNA DEL MONTE—SPEZIA.' The crew pointed me out to each other, gesticulating violently; and, as they found I wore a human semblance, the boldest of them lowered their boat and rowed to the spot where I lay floating. Even then they hesitated. One of them, however, exclaimed, 'Che bello giovane! What a handsome youth! By Bacchus, we must not leave him here to drown;' and stretched out his hand, which I forthwith seized. In a few minutes afterwards, we were all on board the vessel together.

The whole crew now crowded round me with very various expressions of countenance. Some offered me spirits from a flask, which I refused, to their surprise and disgust; others made continual signs of the cross, muttering exorcisms and invocations of saints. They were unanimous, however, in stripping me, which I did not resist, being glad of the dry clothes—a gay cotton cap, a shirt and trousers—which one of them brought. The purse and its contents were examined.

'He is English!' shouted one, showing the shilling.

'Then he is a heretic,' growled another.

'No,' said the one who had pulled me out of the water, and who seemed to be the master or the captain. 'Ecco! Look here!' Detaching the bladders from the handkerchief, he spread it out, displaying the white cross and stars on their blue ground. 'He has made some vow to the Virgin. He wears the Virgin's colours, and is no heretic. We will keep him and take care of him.'

At this, there was a general outburst of displeasure, the burden of which, as far as I could catch, was, 'He has been chased out from heaven; he cannot be good for us! Impio! Maladetto! Eretico! Throw him back into the sea whence you took him.'

In the midst of the hubbub, to which I listened passively, a bright thought seemed to strike my protector. 'At least, let us take all this,' he said, pointing to what had been stripped from me, 'as an offering to our good patroness—to our Lady of the Mountain, yonder.'

'Alla chiesa della Madonna del Monte? Ebbene! Very well. Vedremo; we shall see. We will go to the Church of the Madonna del Monte; but we will not sail again with this little diabolical outcast on board, unless he confess, and receive absolution; unless he prove a true believer, and make his peace with the Virgin and the saints.'

The self-willed crew, seizing all my spoils, including even the empty bladders, pushed me into the boat, leaped in themselves, the captain following, and we were soon on shore.

We landed on a rude little quay, from which, by a broad, straight, dusty street, we reached a public square, or piazza, with a fountain in the middle, where I took a deep and refreshing draught. My spirits rose almost to feverish excitement. There was combined in me a realization of safety, a sense of escape, a consciousness of relief, a load off my mind, an overflow of delight and thankfulness. I was again treading the solid earth, although

with naked feet. As to the crew who had picked me up, they might abuse, ill-treat, and reject me; but they would hardly, now, either murder me, or make me suffer the fate of Jonas.

It was a lovely morning at the close of an Italian summer, such as Englishmen, who have not seen, cannot imagine. Every object bore a rich and golden look. It was market-day, and the country people were arriving in picturesque groups, with their fruit, their fowl, their curious baskets, and a hundred things that were new to me. There were heaps of flowers, tomatoes, grapes, cayenne pepper pods, gourds and vegetable marrows, figs green and violet, strewed around. On the tops of the houses there were large open gables constructed to catch the passing breeze, while many of the colonnades were hung with curtains to keep out the rays of the sun. I was gazing around, forgetting the difficulties of my position in its utter novelty, when the captain motioned me to move on.

We left the square, and were soon out of the town, following an arcade which led up a hill. On reaching an open platform, the arcade ceased. Seats were there for the repose of pilgrims, of which we all profited. Never had I beheld such a charming view, both for richness and variety. In one direction we looked down into a deep valley surrounded by lofty mountains. In another, the whole country was nothing but a garden on the hill-sides which rose from the sea. The ground was covered with aloes, myrtles, orange-trees, and all sorts of beautiful plants. In front of a cottage close by was trained a lemon-tree in full bearing. In short, no description can convey the combination of blue sea with purple mountain broken up into vineyards and olive groves.

We started again, and reached the church by a winding path with an easy slope. At the very door of the edifice my ordeal began; the sailors watched me narrowly. They crossed themselves with holy water. Did I? No; their suspicions were correct. They pushed me roughly

before them into the church, until we reached a chapel or shrine whence daylight was almost excluded, but which was brilliant with the flames of numerous tiny candles. As the sailors knelt before this shrine, bowing low, I could distinguish in it a black female figure crowned with gold and hung about with jewellery. It was a hideous doll, a frightful idol. Around the shrine were hung all sorts of trophies, votive offerings, silver hearts, crutches, models of ships, and pictures. To this heterogeneous collection I was made to add, suspending them with my own proper hands, the clothes, the purse, and the handkerchief — everything of mine which the sailors had brought. That done, they waited, expecting me to kneel and tender my special thanks to Our Lady of the Mountain. Having been taught from my childhood that it was both foolish and simple to worship graven images, I firmly refused, walking away from the altar, and shortly afterwards slipped out of the church.

The captain followed me in silence, as likewise did his boat's crew. They were no longer turbulent; but they were decided. Their consciences were satisfied, their angry passions calmed. They at least had paid their devotions; if I had not paid mine, so much the worse for me. I was unfit to sail in the same ship with them. The captain understood it at a glance, and that no remedy lay in his power. As we slowly descended the Mount of the Virgin, he kindly took my hand, and said, 'I can do no more for you; here we must part. Where you came from, I know not; but I have brought you on shore. May God and the Virgin watch over you!'

When we reached the square, the sailors just gave me one unfriendly parting stare, and then hurried away to the quay as if I had been an unclean thing. The captain bought at a baker's shop a little white loaf, which he put into my hand together with a small silver coin; and then uttering the words 'Addio, mio figlio! Adieu, my son!' and motioning me to remain where I was, he disappeared in the

same direction with the rest. A few minutes afterwards, I beheld the boat put off from the quay and reach the vessel which had rescued me, and which immediately resumed her course. I was left alone, without resource, in the market-place of a small unknown Italian town.

Never having been accustomed to walk unshod, the soles of my feet began to gall me. I drew near to the fountain, and after bathing them in the outrunning stream of water, was quietly beginning to eat my loaf. An old fruit-woman, sitting close by, looked up at my careworn face with an air of pity. In spite of my light clothing the air was oppressive. I was fully exposed to the sun, while she was shaded by a vast umbrella which fulfilled the office of a tent. She gave me a handful of ripe figs to season my bread, 'per carita, out of charity,' as she said, and beckoned to me to repose on a bundle of straw beneath the shade of her canopy. I accepted her hospitality, and, worn out with fatigue both of mind and body, fell asleep with a portmanteau-shaped pumpkin for my pillow.

After an interval of welcome slumber, I was lazily unclosing my eyes, when I beheld in front of me, seated on a basket, a handsome and intelligent-looking man of five-and-twenty, wearing what in England would have passed for a working stonemason's dress. His attention was completely occupied by a small sketch-book which he held in his hand, and in which he seemed to be writing or drawing. I was raising myself upon one elbow, when he gently interposed, saying, 'Pray do not stir. Remain as you are one little moment longer and permit me to finish my study of your feet.'

'As you please,' I replied, scarcely comprehending what he meant. 'I will not stir; I am at your service.'

'A stranger!' he exclaimed; 'and in this dress!' Although I could read Italian with ease, my spoken Italian wanted oiling sadly and betrayed my foreign origin. He continued his work carefully. At last, showing me his sketch, he said, 'Grazie! Thanks! What

do you think of it? I could model a couple of feet from this. But tell me, my lad, what have you got to do?

'Nothing.'

'Have you any means of procuring food and lodging?'

I showed him the remains of my little loaf and the silver coin the captain had given me. 'That is all I have.'

'Just heaven! Where do your parents live?'

'In England.'

'And how did you get here?'

'I fell in the sea, and was picked up by sailors who have left me to shift for myself on shore.'

'And what do you mean to do?'

I shook my head sorrowfully, and made no reply.

'My first idea, then, is a fortunate one,' he said. 'I am a sculptor, not very rich, as you may see; still I am richer than you seem to be at present. You have only your good looks; but they have their value. Your friend, the fruit-woman, with whom I am acquainted, pointed you out to me as you lay asleep. I am busy about a statue of young St. John the Baptist, which is delayed for want of a youthful model. Now the model I am in search of would have to help me in other things, and if clever, he might become my apprentice. In that, you can do as you please. What say you to coming with me? It will be better than having to pass the night beneath the church portico and to beg for food to-morrow morning.'

The old fruit-woman complacently nodded assent.

I reflected for an instant, and it seemed a lucky chance. 'I accept your offer thankfully,' I replied; 'but I should wish to communicate with my friends as soon as possible.'

'Do so at once. A few yards off sits a public writer, who will act as your secretary.'

We proceeded to a table, before which was seated, in the open air, a keen-eyed old man, whose profession was to write from the dictation of the peasantry who required his services. Whatever their business or their secret, they whispered it or

told it aloud, and he put it into writing for them. Births and deaths, hopes and fears, losses and gains, sales and purchases, were left to his discretion to announce in befitting style. Needless to say that a public scribe knowing everybody's interests and intentions, is often resorted to by the Italian police as a source of information.

At our approach, the writer dipped his pen in the leaden inkstand, smoothed his paper, and made room for me, on the bench beside him, to pour my tale into his expectant ear. The usual group of gossipers and listeners, with lazy curiosity, were lingering around.

'I will write myself,' I said, taking the pen. 'In the first place, where am I?' I inquired of my new patron, the sculptor.

'You are at Massa, duchy of Modena; but, as you are not going to remain here, you had better date your letter from Carrara, and request an answer to be sent to Giuseppe Ciampolini's studio.'

I wrote according to his suggestion.

'He can write! Sangué di Dio! He can write!' exclaimed the loungers in astonishment, justly regarding my cotton cap and coarse shirt and trousers incompatible with such an accomplishment. 'But his fingers are not the fingers of a sailor-boy! Who is he? What is he? What has he written?' they asked of the presiding scribe, who shook his head mysteriously, and very reluctantly replied, 'I do not know.'

'The writer does not know what he has written!' Popular feeling might perhaps have turned against me; but as soon as I had folded my letter, directed and sealed it with a wafer, Giuseppe, paying the scribe his due, led me away to the post-office, which was situated on the opposite side of the square. As I slipped my letter into the box, he looked at it with a sceptical glance as if to say, 'It is all very well to post it; but you will not find the posting it of much use.'

'Let us now enter this trattoria,' he said. 'A plate of minestra and a beaker of wine will do you good. We will then depart. But I must

first supply you with shoes and stockings, for I see that you are already footsore.'

CHAPTER VIII.

"Sir George Niedermeyer was sitting in the business-room of his official residence at Modena, a little before the hour when the general public were admitted. His daughter Adelaide, arrived from England the day before, had followed him, claiming the privilege of an only child who had a great deal to say after a long separation. She had just been relating to him the accident that had happened to the balloon at Z—.

'It is a horrible circumstance,' he said, 'and if you had not assured me of the facts, I should have believed it an invention. It is very natural, my dear, that you should feel interested in the poor boy's fate; but the most wretched part of the story is, that with the best will in the world, nobody can do anything to assist or save him.'

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of an usher, who announced a prelate attached to the person of the Cardinal Archbishop of Modena. The prelate entered accordingly. When he had taken his seat, after fulfilling the somewhat lengthy forms of Italian ecclesiastical politeness, he said, 'I have just returned, Sir George, from a visitation tour along the sea-coast; and his Eminence has likewise showed me a singular letter just received from Rome. It requires that, if we hear of any person who has recently *fallen from the sky*, we are to treat him kindly and take the utmost care both of his soul's and his body's health. We do not quite understand its meaning, but it comes from a quarter which we are bound to respect and obey. We might have considered the expressions it employs as merely metaphorical; but near Massa I was shown, at one of the shrines of the Holy Virgin, *ex voto* offerings—a purse, clothes, and other things—said to have been placed there by a lad who was vomited into the sea by a flying

dragon, which instantly mounted in the air and was lost to sight. The miracle was witnessed by the crew of a vessel bound from Spezia to Tunis, who picked up the young man and landed him safely; but he has since quite disappeared. I come to you to help us to a clue; because the money in the purse is English, and the wearing apparel is also of English manufacture.'

'Excuse me, monsignore,' said Adelaide, timidly. 'Is the purse made of blue silk, netted?'

'It is,' replied the prelate, surprised. 'And what, signorina, do you guess the rest of the clothing to be?'

'Black cravat, white waistcoat, leather shoes.'

'There are neither shoes, waistcoat, nor cravat.'

'Blue striped shirt and blue cloth trousers?'

'Yes.'

'Hundreds of lads,' Sir George interposed, 'wear blue striped shirts and blue cloth trousers.'

'Is there a blue silk handkerchief, with a white cross and white stars?' asked Adelaide, eagerly.

'There is.'

'Then it belongs to a person who may have fallen from the sky. We ought to set off, papa, for Massa.'

'Of what use would that be, child—to find the clothes and not their owner?'

'Mr. Burnshus Bussell desires to see you, Sir George,' said the door-keeper, entering.

'Very well. Show him in. Monsignore, I beg you will not disturb yourself.'

'How do you do, Sir George?' said the vivacious intruder. 'I must trouble you once more in my usual hurry. I want to be off immediately for Milan, and my passport must have your *visé*. Thank you much! While you are doing it I'll look at this "Times," which is new to me. Anything fresh in politics? No. There's never any lack of advertisements; and disconsolate fathers and mothers and distressed lovers must put considerable sums in the "Times" pocket. Here's this advertisement again:—"To D. C. of Z.—Return to your anxious

parents or write," et cetera. By-the-way, I have just come from Carrara, and guess I have seen one of these interesting runaways. I wanted to select a chimneypiece, and was shown an unfinished statue of St. John the Baptist, which I think of purchasing by-and-by, if I can get it a bargain. The sculptor would present to me his pupil and model, an English lad, who is sitting for it—a well-made fellow, certainly, but the biggest liar in all the peninsula. 'He told me he had fallen into the sea; which I didn't believe. It was only a blind. When I pressed him about dates he quite broke down; for he must have come all the way from England in about the same time as a carrier pigeon would take to perform the journey. So I gave him a little good advice to the effect that truth went furthest; after which he declined to tell me the name of the vessel from which he fell in the sea. The statue, however, will be charming. Here is a study drawn from the head.'

'Very clever indeed. Look, Adelaide.'

'It is Donald Cartwright himself!' exclaimed Adelaide, who had not lost a word of the gentleman's speech.

'Cartwright! He told me his name was Cartwright, and that his father was Mayor of Z—. But you know he might have found that out from an almanack, and so assumed a respectable alias. I am very glad he is not an impostor; my statue will be all the more valuable. Good day, Sir George. Can I do anything for you in Milan?'

'Signor Giacomo Consalvi,' said the usher at the door, introducing a fresh visitor as soon as the other had turned his back.

'The head of the Modenese police,' the diplomatist whispered to his daughter.

'Can I say just one little word in confidence in your private ear?' the new-comer blandly inquired.

'Certainly you can,' was the courteous reply. 'Your Excellency will take the trouble to step with me and look at some new pelargoniums which my daughter has brought

from England, and which we are nursing in this bow-window.'

'Can you tell me anything,' he asked, in the lowest possible tone of voice, 'of a British subject (as we suppose) who signs himself Donald Cartwright?'

'I don't know. Perhaps I can. Why do you ask?'

'You are behind the scenes, and therefore I may tell you that we have lately stopped a letter with that signature because it contains ambiguous expressions. Read it. The duke does not wish his duchy to be a hiding-place for political exiles, nor for doubtful characters. All artists, you know, are more or less liberal; but the sculptor with whom this person is harbouring we know to hold very advanced opinions indeed.'

The English Minister read as follows:—

'MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER, —I escaped from almost a hopeless position by throwing myself into the sea. I found at last in the Mediterranean the only possible means of rescue. I am now here, or close by, safe and sound, and await your directions how to proceed, trusting that your anxiety on my account will not have been of long duration. I have found a refuge with an Italian artist, to whom you will be kind enough to address, as under, directions for the steps you wish me next to take. Believe me, my dear father and mother, to remain, in sorrow and in great haste,

'Your affectionate son,

'DONALD CARTWRIGHT.'

'Carrara, Duchy of Modena.

'With Guiseppe Ciampolini, Sculptor.'

'Then his friends know nothing of this?' Sir George observed. 'I think you had better send it on.'

'We should have forwarded it in any case, in order to stop the reply to it. But if you answer for the party we shall pay no more attention to the correspondence. You are aware, Sir George, that I only execute the orders given from a higher quarter. The duke is very anxious to keep away all suspicious strangers.'

'Adelaide, my dear, come and read this. A wonderful surprise awaits you. Can you guarantee to Signor Consalvi the respectability of the writer?'

'It is he! He is safe! We have found him at last,' exclaimed the delighted girl. 'Assuredly he belongs to an honourable family, who will joyfully welcome him back again. Poor Mrs. Cartwright! She is still, then, in uncertainty respecting her son's fate. I will write to Miss Crittenden, by this afternoon's courier, to break the happy news to her.'

'Do so: I think you may safely do it. Signor Consalvi, the person about whom you inquire is not, I think, a *mauvais sujet*—not an object of suspicion for the ducal government. Monsignore, I thank you much for your visit. Be pleased to tell his Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop that we believe the party after whom he inquires to be at this moment at Carrara, and that, as soon as the heat of the day is over, my daughter and myself will start in search of him.

CHAPTER IX.

My life at Carrara was an easy one; although sitting to the sculptor partly wrapped in haircloth drapery, maintaining the same attitude and the same expression of countenance, proved more irksome than I had expected. Still I did my best; at first through gratitude, afterwards from an awakening love of art. My other labours in the studio were light, and my leisure moments pure enjoyment. The mountain air, the glorious climate, the fruits and flowers in rich profusion, afforded increasing and innocent pleasure. My mind was comparatively tranquil. I had written home, and awaited an early and affectionate reply.

But day after day came and went, and with it came no reply. A letter, I knew, from England, required a certain time to arrive; still I began to feel the effects of hope deferred. Physical causes also had their influence. However well I had borne

up under the fatigue, now that the excitement of danger was over exhaustion naturally followed. Guiseppe saw that I was ailing, and made me refrain from every task. He procured me meat, good wine, and choice fruit, notwithstanding all which kindness I fell seriously ill. Fever confined me to my bed. The doctor came, and wanted to bleed me after the fashion of his countrymen, which Guiseppe steadily refused, and thereby, I believe, saved my life. But I kept no more count of the lapse of time; delirium and weakness had interrupted my reckoning.

Slowly recovering, I was sitting at an open window which looked out on the mountains whence the famous marble is drawn, when Guiseppe announced 'English friends!' They were Sir George Niedermeyer and his daughter. To shorten my story, they remained at Carrara a couple of days, to allow me to gain further strength, and then they took me with them, by easy stages, to Modena. Three weeks afterwards they told me to prepare to receive the visit of other friends who would shortly arrive. In an hour or two I was in my mother's arms, while my father stood by shedding tears of joy. They had been accompanied to Italy by Captain and Mrs. Fitzjames, who, to avoid agitating me too much, did not make their appearance till the following day.

I was speedily restored to health and strength. We were in no hurry to leave the charmed peninsula, and found much to do there. Mrs. Fitzjames performed a pilgrimage barefoot from Carrara to the church of La Madonna del Monte, and redeemed my spoils by more brilliant offerings of very considerable value. My parents and myself visited my friend Guiseppe, and sent off for England, by way of Leghorn, half the contents of his studio. Our whole party met at Carrara before our final departure for home. On looking round at my severely rationalistic mother, my good Church-of-England father, the sceptical yet not irreverent sculptor, and the devout Catholic Mrs. Fitzjames—all met to rejoice over the finding a

poor lost sheep, I could not help exclaiming mentally,

'One touch of love makes all the world akin.'

The newspapers never mentioned my adventure, because it underwent the process of hushing-up. There had been no injury to life or limb; the lost balloon was duly paid for; I had travelled, and had returned in company with my parents; and nobody had a right to make unfavourable comments. The Hugginsons had no reason to be proud of Emma's conduct, nor had Griffiths to boast of his. Captain and Mrs. Fitzjames after their marriage did not want their names unnecessarily brought before the public; and so the escape of the balloon shared the fate of other nine days' wonders.

Finally, I did not marry Emma Hugginson. Whom I did marry (after a long probation) you may perhaps guess. I don't think that we either of us have ever repented of taking that step. We pay an annual visit to Lord and Lady Erin, where I have the pleasure of beholding my youthful features immortalized in Carrara marble. Griffiths will probably die in his bed, for he has given up ballooning, and acts as professor of gymnastics to the little Fitzjameses, of whom there are seven. The countess is still a good Catholic, and a strict observer of ecclesiastical discipline; but at fish-day dinners the butler whispers in my ear, 'Sir, there's a fine leg of mutton on the sideboard.'



THE GREAT CHRISTMAS CATTLE MARKET.

PERHAPS the most wonderful manifestation of animal excitement ever seen in England was at Smithfield Cattle Market on one of the great days. Smithfield is a very dull, dismal, dismantled place now, waiting for the time when the Underground Railway and the Dead Meat Market will occupy part of its area, and put a little more money in circulation in the neighbourhood; but until nine years ago the Cattle Market at that spot was one of the sights of London. Within an area of little over six acres, business was transacted which ought to have been accommodated with twice or thrice the space—irrespective of the road traffic which crossed it in various directions. 'Into this narrow area,' as a 'Quarterly' reviewer said shortly before the change of system, 'surrounded with slaughter-houses, triperies, bone-boiling houses, gut-scraperies, &c., the mutton chops, scrags, saddles, legs, sirloins, and rounds which grace the smiling boards of our noble imperial capital throughout the year, have, for the major part, been goaded and confused for the benefit of the civic corporation installed in Guildhall.' It was *always* dirty and wild with confusion on market-days; and on Bartholomew Fair days the scene was perhaps such as had no parallel in any other country—a mass of filth into which pleasure-seekers forced their way, uncertain whether an overdriven ox would gore them before they could reach Richardson's or Wombwell's show, or the learned pig, or the fat boy. Even when the fair was abolished, there was one day in the year on which Smithfield was under high pressure of a very extraordinary kind. This was always on the Monday nearest to, or shortly before, the middle of December, when most of the bullocks and sheep intended for Christmas Day in the metropolis were sold to the butchers. To accommodate the seething, living mass in Smithfield itself was simply an impossibility. Long Lane, St. John Street, West Street, King Street, Hosier

Lane, Cock Lane, Giltspur Street, Duke Street—all were filled with the overflows from the central area. 'If a stranger can make his way through the crowd, and by means of any vantage-ground or doorstep can manage to raise himself a few feet above the general level, he sees before him, in one direction, by the dim, red light of hundreds of torches, a writhing, parti-coloured mass, surmounted by twisting horns; some in rows, tied to rails which run along the whole length of the open space; some gathered together in one struggling knot. In another quarter, the moving torches reveal to him, now and then, through the misty light, a couple of acres of living wool, or roods of pigskins. If he ventures into their closely-wedged and labouring mass, he is enabled to watch more narrowly the reason of the universal ferment among the beasts. The drover with his goad is forcing the cattle into the smallest possible compass; and a little further on, half a dozen men are making desperate efforts to drag refractory oxen up to the rails with ropes. In the scuffle which ensues, the slipping of the ropes often snaps the fingers of the persons who are conducting the operation; and there is scarcely a drover who has not had some of his digits broken. The sheep, squeezed into hurdles like figs into a drum, lie down upon each other, 'and make no sign;' the pigs, on the other hand, cry out before they are hurt. This scene, which has more the appearance of a hideous nightmare than a weekly exhibition in a civilized country, is accompanied by the barking of dogs, the bellowing of cattle, the roaring of men, and the dull blows of sticks—a *charivari* of sounds that must be heard to be appreciated.'

The year 1854 witnessed the close of that wild scene. During no less than *seven hundred years* the chief cattle-market for the metropolis had been held in Smithfield. For aught we can tell to the contrary, the 'beeves' and 'muttons' 'veals' and

'porks,' which loaded the tables of our early Norman kings, and supplied the well-filled larders of many a monastery and priory, were bought in this place; and there is no record of the market ever having been interrupted. As the corporation of the City of London derived revenues from the market, every project for reform suggested during the last hundred years of its existence was met by obstinate antagonism. When hard-pressed, they enlarged the area of the market a little, to afford room for a few more beasts; but to remove the market to a better spot they did not, and would not, until frightened by a threat that the Government would establish a metropolitan cattle market, in which the City should have no concern at all. Then it was, and only then, that they built a new market at Pentonville. The City had been wont to charge a shilling for the use of a permanent pen on market-days, twopence for a hurdle pen, a penny for a 'tye' of beasts or calves, twopence for a score of sheep, fourpence for a score of pigs, twentypence for a score of cattle, and so on; that is, a charge for the space occupied, and a further charge for the number of animals sent. There was no certainty that these tolls and dues would pay the interest on the cost of a new market, therefore the Corporation hung back; but, as we have said, the voice of the public became too strong to be resisted—a new site was purchased, and a new market built. The last 'great day' at Smithfield was on the 11th of December, 1854, when thirty thousand of the finest animals in the world were jammed into this small space. The live-stock had been pouring in ever since ten o'clock on the preceding evening (Sunday), and had become one dense mass of animalism by daylight—brown-coated Devons in one place, bulky Herefords in another, short-horns in a third, Scotch cattle in a fourth, Welsh in a fifth, foreign cattle in a sixth, sheep here, calves there, pigs in another spot; and all the poor animals so placed that access to a drink of water was nearly an impossibility. It was not the last market-day, but

the last 'great' day, the last December market for the supply of two or three million Londoners with their Christmas dinners. The last, really and positively the last cattle market at Smithfield, was held on the 11th of June, 1855; and the graziers and salesmen, bankers and clerks, drovers and butchers, made their arrangements to commence business at the new spot four days afterwards—on the 15th. The Act for the construction of the New Cattle Market was passed in 1851; but as the Corporation went to work unwillingly, it took four years to complete all the arrangements. They bought seventy-five acres of land at Pentonville, on and near the spot where the famous suburban tea-gardens known as Copenhagen House once stood; it cost 60,000*l.* They appropriated fifteen acres for a market, fifteen for cattle-lairs and slaughter-houses, and kept the rest in reserve. When the late estimable Prince Consort opened the new market, two days before the commencement of business, he said: 'A certain dislocation of habits and interests must inevitably attend the removal of the great City market from the site it has occupied for so many centuries; and this may possibly retard, for the moment, the full development of the undertaking; but any opposition arising from such causes will soon cease; and the farmers will, doubtless, soon learn to appreciate the boon thus conferred upon them by the London Corporation, in the increased facility afforded to them for the transaction of their business, and the comparative security with which they will be enabled to bring up and display their valuable stock in the great Metropolitan Cattle Market.'

The market is certainly well planned, and kept admirably clean, except during the actual market-hours. Speaking generally, we may say that it is an irregular quadrangle, with a clock-tower in the centre, and four taverns at the four corners, with broad avenues crossing each other at the clock-tower; and the open area set off into divisions for the different kinds of live-stock. Not less than 400,000*l.* have been

spent upon the land and buildings; and when we see how favourably the spot is situated in reference to the railways on the north side of the Thames, we cannot but think that the money has been well laid out: although the Corporation complain a little of the financial result. A West-end butcher, driving up in his cart to the nearest entrance in York Road (known to our fathers and grandfathers as Maiden Lane), first comes to the hostelry known as the 'Black Bull,' if from the City, he comes to the 'White Horse,' if from the north-east, the 'Lamb,' if the north-west, the 'Lion.' These houses were built by, and belong to, the Corporation; they are leased by publicans, and transact their chief business on the two market-days in each week. The open space of the market will accommodate at one time about 7,000 cattle and 42,000 sheep, with a proportionate number of calves and pigs, in a degree of comfort which the poor animals could never obtain at Smithfield. The calf and pig-markets are covered, the roofs being supported by iron columns, which act at the same time as water-drains. In the centre of the whole area is a twelve-sided structure, called 'Bank Buildings,' surmounted by one of the most elegant campaniles, or bell-towers, constructed in recent times in this country. The twelve sides give entrance to twelve sets of offices occupied by bankers, salesmen, railway companies, and electric telegraph companies. No building or open space in England, perhaps, is better drained than the market. The whole of the clay underneath, to a depth of several feet, was first burned to the state of red brick; then drains were formed in every direction; then granite paving was laid down; then hollow pillars were set up to sustain the roofs, pens, &c., and to carry rain-water down into the drains; and, lastly, an abundant supply of water was distributed to stand-pipes, all over the market. The horizontal bars of the pens are formed of Kyanized timber; and every precaution seems to have been taken that the work, well suited to its purpose, shall be durable for ages. The

southern portion of the area, not occupied as a market, is appropriated as lairs and abattoirs—that is, lairs or sheds where the live-stock can rest in peace if they arrive some time before market hours; and abattoirs where they can be slaughtered after being sold to the butchers. Two massive buildings on the north side of the area look very desolate; they were intended as hotels; but no one needs them for hotel purposes, and no one will rent them. The late Mr. Bunning, the architect to whose skill we are indebted for the market, introduced these buildings as part of his plan; and we ought not, perhaps, to blame him that they have been found to be superfluous. When the unfortunate *Orphéonists* visited London from France, a few years ago, they were bedded for a night or two in those buildings, owing to gross negligence on the part of those who ought to have catered for them; and the unfitness of the locality was most wretchedly apparent.

Any Monday or Thursday (the old Friday's market was changed to Thursday in 1853) we may see at the New Cattle Market, on an average scale, that which is to be seen on a grander scale at the great day just before Christmas. The finest bullocks and sheep that the world ever saw begin to come into the open area at three o'clock in the morning, bellowing and 'baa'-ing to a degree not very pleasant to the inhabitants of Camden Villas, hard by; and they are coming in all the forenoon; for until the market closes, at two in the afternoon, the clerk of the market is always ready to allot 'pens' and 'tyes' for any new-comers that may arrive. If we could trace the routes by which all these animals have reached Pentonville, we should be struck with the wonderful activity shown in supplying the metropolis with butchers' meat. Time was when the bullocks and sheep, calves and pigs, wended their weary way along the turnpike-roads, arriving at Smithfield in an exhausted state, which boded ill for the quality of the meat afterwards derivable from them. But now a wonderful change

is visible. Eight distinct lines of railway bring live-stock into the metropolis, and steamers bring them from Holland and Denmark to the quays below London Bridge. Very recently a plan has been commenced for landing these Dutch and Danish cattle at Harwich, and forwarding them by rail to the very gates of the market: thereby obviating the necessity for driving them through the City streets from the quays or docks. The North-Western and Great Northern bring up mighty flocks and herds from the north; the Great Western brings the Devons and the Herefords, the Welsh and the Irish; and the Eastern Counties (or Great Eastern) brings those which have been fattened in the rich pastures of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. The southern railways contribute only in a minor degree to the supply. Every year the ratio of foreign to British live-stock is increasing, without lessening by a single penny the prosperity of our own graziers: showing one of the manifold advantages of free trade in the supply of food. As to the number of animals thus consigned annually to the mercies of the London butchers, they are something marvellous. In the last ten years of old Smithfield Market, the cattle brought thither for sale varied from 193,000 to 277,000 in each year, and the sheep from 1,344,000 to 1,461,000. Dividing these quantities by 104, the number of market-days in a year, an industrious schoolboy might find what are the average numbers on each market-day. The latest available returns at the New Cattle Market (for which we are indebted to the courtesy of the clerk of the market) are those for the year 1862; they tell of 304,741 bullocks, 1,498,500 sheep, 27,951 calves, and 29,470 pigs. The bullocks, we are told, average about 630 lb. each, the sheep about 90 lb., and the calves about 150 lb. The great Christmas sale, for reasons connected with our national love of good cheer on Christmas-day, is always far above the average of other days. In the closing years of the career of old Smithfield, it generally ranged between 6,000 and

7,000 bullocks, and between 20,000 and 25,000 sheep. On the 15th of December, 1862, the last great day which we shall be able to talk about in the present article, the number of bullocks was greater than ever before known at any metropolitan market, being 8,430; while the sheep were only 20,900. There is something about this sheep-ish question worthy of note. Although there are more people than ever in London willing to eat and able to buy mutton, the supply of sheep at the Cattle Market is decreasing rather than increasing. Many and many a year, in Smithfield, the supply was larger than it was at Pentonville in 1862. The truth is, the country sheep-farmers and graziers now send up many of their sheep and oxen dead instead of alive—especially sheep. They kill the animals, cut off the primest legs, saddles, sirloins, &c., pack them carefully in cloths made for the purpose, and send them up by rail to Newgate Market; where, unless the graziers have acted like scoundrels, by sending off their meat in a state unfit for food, it is unpacked in a cool and perfectly wholesome condition. It is found, all things considered, that this is frequently more profitable than sending up the sheep and oxen alive; and the system is extending every year. The City people do not like it, because Newgate Street is too much blocked up by the bustle of the dead-meat market; the Leadenhall and White-chapel slaughtermen do not like it, because it interferes with their trade; and our country cousins do not like it, because we run away with the prime legs and saddles of mutton, and leave them to do their best with the shoulders and scrags; but nevertheless the system has many advantages.

Picking our way along the well-arranged avenues of the market on a busy day, we shall be sure to see salesmen all around us. These salesmen illustrate the remarkable way in which the trade of the market is carried on. The graziers and sheep-farmers do not sell to the butchers; they know nothing of them, for the salesmen take all the trouble off their hands. Sometimes

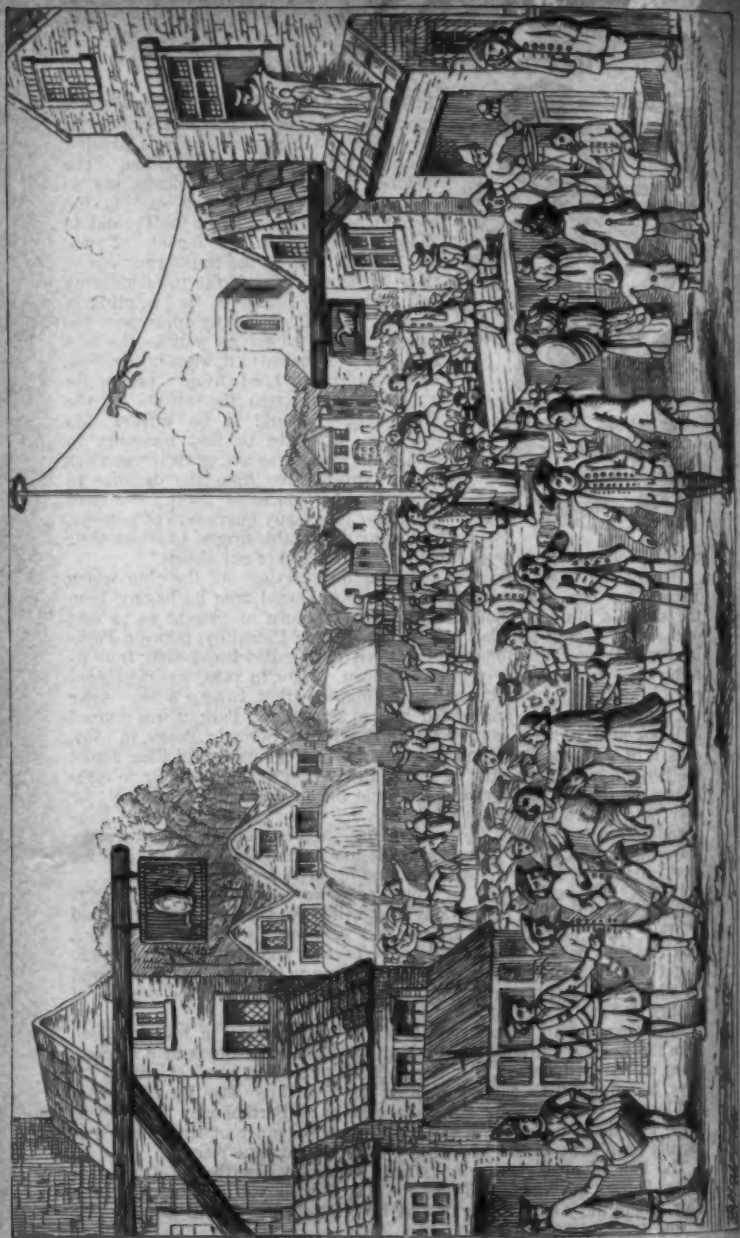
salesmen come up from the country; sometimes, residing in London, they daily receive letters and telegraphic messages from their clients, the stock-farmers. They usually know beforehand how many live-stock will be consigned to their care for a particular market-day, and they arrange with the clerk of the market for pen-space and rail-space. The salesmen must be 'early birds,' for they are ready to receive the live-stock as soon as it arrives; and as the butchers are also up betimes, there is a vast amount of business transacted before London has rubbed its eyes and taken off its nightcap. Most of the butchers deal with particular salesmen; but it is open to them to deal with any. The salesman knows exactly the state of the market; and it is upon him, rather than upon the farmer or the butcher, that depends the range of prices on any particular day: he gets the highest prices he can, but does not spoil the market by holding out too long against unwilling buyers. It is a custom of the place that no money goes from butcher to salesman in the open market; they both enter one of the banking-houses near the clock tower, and the clerks make out an exact account of the market tolls, the salesman's commission, and the banker's commission, in addition to the price of the animals. These three extra items together only amount to a small sum, about 4s. for a bullock and 3d. for a sheep. Each salesman transacts his business with one particular banker; and when the day's business is over, the banker assists him in transmitting the proceeds to his country clients, minus the small expense-charges which have to be deducted. The system is so thoroughly organized and well understood, that both farmer and butcher are better served under it than if there were no intermediate salesman.

And the drovers, and the dogs! what about them? They are generally the servants of the salesmen, though licensed (the men, if not the dogs) by the Corporation. What a rough set they are! True, they have rough work to do, and their patience is much tried in the attempt to

guide or drive their *protégés* through the busy streets of London. Some of them take charge of the animals at the railway-stations and at the landing-places from the steamers, and pilot them to Pentonville; while others, after the market, see them safely to the butchers or to the slaughter-houses. Matters are better now with these men than in former days, so far as regards the kind of work, if not the rate of payment. It was a dreadful scene, that of getting the poor beasts into Smithfield before sale, and out of Smithfield after it; the crush, the cursing, the cruelty, were something awful. The substitution of the fine New Cattle Market for the old one, and the convenient position of two or three railway-stations near it, enable the drovers, as well as the butchers, to behave a little more like civilized beings on market-days.

As we have no Zadkiel's Magic Crystal to look into, we cannot see what will be the number of *rosbifs* on London dinner-tables on Christmas Day, 1863; but if the precedent of 1862 be followed, there will be something like 8,000,000 lbs. of live-stock at Pentonville on the 'great day' for the present year. Would that all the poor in our metropolis could obtain a rateable proportion of this good cheer! Why, it would give us nearly three pounds a-piece, besides the country-killed meat, the porkers and sucking-pigs, geese and turkeys, fowls and chickens, hams and tongues, and all the rest of it. Few things are more wonderful than the manner in which a bountiful Providence brings together food for three millions of persons living in one great city; and yet we seldom think about it. We know that if we have money in our pockets or purses, the food is to be had close to our own doors. No scarcity in any other part of the world produces scarcity in London: high prices there may be, but no scarcity. But if there be *not* money in the pocket or the purse—ah, well! let us not anticipate evil; let us rather hope that all the living members of London Society will on the approaching Christmas Day have a Christmas dinner to eat.

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[From a Water-colour Drawing of the Festival.]

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MAY FAIR A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.



TREETOLOGY in London presents many anomalies; the old rural names being still applied to quarters which present no other trace of their former appropriation. The histories in little of these places are so many episodes, or 'green spots' in the account of the great Town itself; and to show the changes of the tenants of such localities, as well as the transformations of their surfaces, is one of the most amusing and instructive phases in the painting of London life. Disraeli fully appreciates the interest of the subject, as well as the best mode of doing justice to it, when he observes, with reference to Lord Orford's project for a book-walk through the streets of the Metropolis,—'should it be carried into execution, it would be first necessary to obtain the *original names*, or their meanings of our streets, free from the disguise in which time has concealed them. We shall otherwise lose many characters of persons, and many remarkable events, of which their

original denominations would remind the historian of our streets.'

One of the most attractive localities for carrying out the plan which Disraeli has here chalked out,—is *May Fair*, named from its having been the site of a low metropolitan carnival, but known at present as 'a seat of the most elegant population.' It lies north of Piccadilly, between Park-lane and Devonshire House, and was originally called Brook-field, from its being close to the brook or burn—Tyburn. Here, in 1688, was appointed to be held, by royal grant, a cattle and horse market, twice a week. After the suppression of the annual fair held in St. James's Park, it was revived in Brook-field, as early as the reign of Charles the Second: Pepys, in 1660, calls it St. James's Fair; and the name was not changed until King James the Second, in the 4th year of his reign (1688) granted the Fair to commence on the 1st of May, and continue fifteen days after it, yearly, for ever; and where multitudes of the booths were 'not for trade and merchandise, but for musick, shows, drinking, gaming, raffling, lotteries, stage plays, and drolls.' The grant was made to Sir John Coell and his heirs for ever, in trust for Henry Lord Dover, and his heirs for ever.

In the *Postman*, No. 597, for April, 1699, we read: 'These are to give notice, that on the first day of May next will begin the Fair at the east end of Hyde Park, near Bartlet House, and continue for fifteen days after. The two first days of which will be for Leather and live Cattle; and care is and will be taken to make the ways leading to it, as well as the ground on which it is kept, much more convenient than formerly for persons of quality that are pleased to resort thither.'

Next year, by an advertisement quoted by Malcolm, in his *Anecdotes*, from the London journals of 27th April, we learn: 'In Brook-field market-place, at the east corner, is a fair to be kept for the space of sixteen (?) days, beginning with the 1st of May; the first three days for live cattle and leather, with the same entertainments as at Bartholomew Fair, where there are shops to be let ready built for all manner of tradesmen that usually keep fairs, and so to continue yearly at the same place.'

The Fair of next year, 1701, is thus admirably described in a letter of Brian Fairfax, in Nichols's *Tatler*, i. 418: 'I wish you had been at May Fair, where the rope-dancing would have recompensed your labour. All

the nobility in town were there, and I am sure, even you, at your years, must have had your youthful wishes, to have beheld the beauty, shape, and activity of Lady Mary when she danced. Pray ask my Lord Fairfax after her, who, though not the only Lord by twenty, was every night an admirer of her while the Fair lasted. There was the city of Amsterdam, well worth your seeing; every street, every individual house was carved in wood, in exact proportion one to another; the Stadthouse was as big as your hand; the whole, though an irregular figure, yet that you may guess, about ten yards diameter. Here was a boy to be seen, that within one of his eyes had DEUS MEUS in capital letters, as GULIELMUS is on half-a-crown; round the other he had a Hebrew inscription, but this you must take as I did, upon trust.* I am now drinking your health at Lockett's, therefore do me justice in Yorkshire.'

The May Fair of 1702, though it opened merrily, did not close without a tragedy. There was Mr. Miller's booth over against Mr. Barnes, the rope-dancer's, where was 'presented an excellent droll,

* This sight reminds us that a similar wonder was exhibited at the Bazaar, (now Princess' Theatre,) in Oxford-street, in the autumn of 1828; when a little girl was shown there with Napoleon Empereur on the iris of her left eye; and Empereur Napoleon on the iris of the right eye; explained by the child's mother intently looking, during her pregnancy, at a five-franc piece of Napoleon's, which had been given to her by her brother previous to a long absence. It is hard to say whether the marvel of 1701 or that of 1828 is most credible!

called Crispin Crispianus, or a Shoemaker a Prince, with the best machines, swinging and dancing, ever yet in the Fair.' The pickpockets and other rogues, however, flocked there in such numbers, that the magistrates interfered, and some soldiers taking part with the mob against the constables, a Mr. John Cooper, a peace-officer, was killed; he was buried in St. James's church, and his funeral sermon was preached by Dr. Wedgewood, before the justices, high constable, &c., of Westminster. The above riot led to an agitation to put down the Fair, when the *Observer* said: 'Oh the piety of some people about the Queen (Anne), who can suffer things of this nature to go undiscovered to Her Majesty, and consequently unpunished! Can any rational man imagine that Her Majesty would permit so much lewdness as is committed at May Fair for so many days together so near her royal palace, if she knew anything of the matter? I do not believe the patent for that Fair allows the patentees the liberty of setting up the Devil's shops, and exposing his merchandise to sale; nor was there ever one Fair or market in England constituted for this purpose. But this Fair is kept contrary to law, and in defiance of justice: for the last Fair when the civil magistrates came to keep the Queen's peace there, one constable was killed, and three others were wounded.' One Cork, a butcher, was executed at Tyburn for the murder; but the Fair was not abolished.

A few of the May Fair bills will best afford an idea of the show entertainments.

AT JOHN SLEEP'S MUSIC BOOTH, (FROM
TURNMILL STREET.)
IN BROOK-FIELD MARKET, AT THE SIGN OF
THE STAR MUSICK-BOOTH,
DURING THE SIXTEEN DAYS OF MAY FAIR,
GENTLEFOLKS AND OTHERS WILL BE ENTERTAINED
WITH VARIETY OF ALL SORTS OF
MUSICK, SINGING, DANCING,
AND OTHER PLEASANT PASTIMES.
VIVAT REGINA.

WILLIAM REX.

MAY FAIR.

MILLER'S

OR THE LOYAL ASSOCIATION BOOTH,

AT THE UPPER END OF

BROOK FIELD MARKET,

NEAR HYDE PARK CORNER,

During the time of MAY FAIR WILL BE PRESENTED

AN EXCELLENT DROLL, CALLED

KING WILLIAM'S HAPPY DELIVERANCE

AND GLORIOUS TRIUMPH OVER HIS ENEMIES,

OR THE CONSULTATION OF THE

POPE, DEVIL, FRENCH KING, AND THE GRAND TURK,

WITH THE WHOLE FORM OF THE SIEGE OF NAMUR,

AND THE HUMOURS OF A RENEGADE FRENCH MAN

AND BRANDY JEAN,

WITH THE CONCEITS OF SCARAMOUCHE AND HARLEQUIN,

TOGETHER WITH THE BEST SINGING AND DANCING THAT WAS

EVER SEEN IN A FAIR, ALSO A DIALOGUE SONG.

VIVAT REX.

HUSBAND'S BOOTH,

AT THE UPPER END OF BROOKFIELD MARKET,

NEAR HYDE PARK CORNER,

DURING THE TIME OF THE FAIR WILL BE PRESENTED

AN EXCELLENT DROLL, CALL'D THE FAIRY QUEEN, OR

LOVE FOR LOVE,

AND THE HUMOURS OF THE HUNGRY CLOWN,

TOGETHER WITH THAT EXCELLENT ART OF

VAULTING ON THE MANAGED HORSE,

PERFORMED BY THOMAS SIMPSON, THE FAMOUS

VAULTING MASTER OF ENGLAND,

WITH SONGS AND DANCES, SCENES, FLYING, AND MASQUEENS,

THE LIKE NEVER SEEN IN THE FAIR BEFORE.

VIVAT REX.

THE DROLL

INTERMINGLED WITH A MOST

DELIGHTFUL MERRY

COMEDY

AFTER THE MANNER OF AN

OPERA,

WITH EXTRAORDINARY VARIETIES OF

SINGING AND DANCING,

by

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF SOUTHAMPTON'S

SERVANTS.

VIVAT REGINA.

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ANNE REGINA.

AT MR. FINLEY'S AND MR. BARNES'S BOOTH,
STANDING ON THE SAME GROUND AS IT DID LAST YEAR,
DURING THE TIME OF MAY FAIR,
ARE TO BE SEEN

THE FAMOUS ROPE DANCERS OF EUROPE.

VIVAT REGINA.

From the above, and other May Fair bills of the same period, it appears that Sorias as Scaramouch, Baxter as Harlequin, and Evans as an Equestrian, were the favourite performers.

The enormities of the Fair appear to have been little abated; for Strype describes it as a place 'where young people did use to resort, and by the temptation they met with here commit much sin and disorder. Here they spent their time and money in drunkenness, fornication, gaming, and lewdness, whereby were occasioned oftentimes quarrels, tumults, and shedding of blood.' Therefore, in November, 1708, the grand jury of Westminster made a presentment of 'the public enormities and inconveniences, and being encouraged by the example of the worthy magistracy of the City of London in their late proceedings against Bartholomew Fair, did present, as a public nuisance and inconvenience, the yearly riotous and tumultuous assembly,' called May Fair: 'in which place many loose, idle, and disorderly persons did rendezvous, draw, and allure young persons, servants, and others, to meet there to game, &c. The subject was taken up strongly: Sir Henry Ellis, in his edition of Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, mentions a scarce Tract in his possession, entitled 'Reasons for suppressing the yearly Fair in Brook-field, Westminster, commonly called May Fair, recommended to the consideration of all persons of Honour and Virtue,' 8vo. Lond. 1709. 43 pages. The Fair was then discontinued; for, in the *Tatler*, April 18, 1709, we read: 'Advices from the upper end of Piccadilly say that May Fair is utterly abolished, and we hear that Mr. Pinkethman has removed his ingenious company of strollers to Greenwich.' And in the *Tatler*,

May 24, we read that 'the Fair is now broke; but it is allowed still to sell animals there. Therefore, if any lady or gentleman have occasion for a tame elephant, let him inquire of Mr. Pinkethman, who has one to dispose of at a reasonable rate. The downfall of May Fair has quite sunk the price of this noble creature, as well as of many other curiosities of nature. And great is the desolation among the gentlemen and ladies who were the ornaments of the town, and used to shine in plumes and diadems; the heroes being most of them pressed, and the queens beating hemp. Mrs. Saraband, so famous for her ingenious puppet-show, has set up a shop in the Exchange, where she sells her little troop under the term of "jointed babies;"' it is added, by the way, that the 'rake-hell Punch,' by his loose life and conversation, did not a little contribute to the ruin of the Fair.

The Fair of 1708 was the last for several years; but was subsequently renewed, as the accompanying illustration, from a coloured drawing, shows the May Fair of 1716, when the men wore all sorts of cocked hats to give a little life to their sagacity. Here we have the May-pole, with its flying rope; the mountebank on his platform; the preparation for the ass-race; the house on the right has its show-cloth of Adam and Eve; beyond it is the sign of the Dog and Duck, for duck-hunting was a prime sport here, especially for the butchers of the market; and in the distance is May Fair chapel. The rural aspect of the place—its gabled houses, backed by lofty trees, should be noticed, for these were soon doomed to change. However, the Fair survived; for the newspapers of 1736 inform us that 'an ass-race attracted vast crowds to May Fair;' and in 1744, the grand

jury of Middlesex, among several gaming-houses and places frequented by people of bad character, presented Hallam's New Theatre at May Fair, for its great meetings of idle and disorderly persons.

The Fair was held on the site of what is now Curzon Street, Hertford Street, and Chesterfield House and gardens. John Thomas Smith, who died in 1833, in his *Streets of London*, tells us that 'the ground between the back of Lord Coventry's, No. 106, (Piccadilly,) and the south wall of the Earl of Chesterfield's garden in Curzon-street, was, in 1722, an irregular space; "May Fair-row" and "Hay-hill-row" being, at that time, the only regular buildings. There was, within memory, on the western portion, partly on the site of Hertford-street, an old wooden public-house, one of the original signs of "The Dog and Duck," behind which, towards the north, was a stream of clear water, nearly 200 feet square, surrounded by a gravel-walk, boarded up knee-high, and shaded all round by willows.' This pond was notorious for the cruel sport of Duck-hunting: here is one of its characteristic announcements:—

'June 25, 1748.—At May Fair Ducking Pond, on Monday next, the 27th inst., Mr. Hooton's Dog Nero, (ten years old, with hardly a tooth in his head to hold a duck, but well known for his *goodness* to all that have seen him hunt,) hunts six ducks for a guinea, against the bitch called the Flying Spaniel, from the Ducking Pond on the other side of the water, who has beat all she has hunted against, except Mr. Hooton's Good-Blood. To begin at two o'clock.

'Mr. Hooton begs his customers won't take it amiss to pay Twopence admittance at the gate, and take a ticket, which will be allowed as *Cash* in their reckoning. No person admitted without a Ticket, that such as are not liked may be kept out.

'Note. Right Lincoln Ale.'

Duck-hunting was held in such high repute in the reign of Charles II., that the King and many of his prime nobility often witnessed it, and with their dogs joined in the sport. In Mrs. Behn's play of *Sir Patrick Fyney*, a Sir Credulous Easy talks about a cobbler, his dog-tutor,—and his expectation of soon becoming 'the Duke of Ducking-pond.'

In Maitland's *London*, 1756, May Fair is mentioned as still annually celebrated. And, of its humours, some ten years later, we have a curious picture by that painstaking antiquary, John Carter, who, writing in 1816, says:

'Fifty years have passed away since this place of amusement was at its height of attraction: the spot where the Fair was held still retains the name of May Fair, and exists in much the same state as at the above period; for instance, Shepherd's Market, and houses surrounding it on the north and east sides; and White Horse-street, Shepherd's-court, Sun-court, and Market-court. Westward: an open space, extending to Tyburn (now Park) lane, since built upon as Chapel-street, Shepherd-street, Market-street, Hertford-street, &c. Southward: the noted Ducking-pond, house, and gardens; in a large Riding-school, Carrington-street, the residence of the noted Kitty Fisher, (about 1779.) The Market-house consisted of two stories: first story, a long and cross aisle for butchers' shops, and externally, other shops connected with culinary purposes: second story, used as a theatre at fair time, for dramatic performances. My recollection serves to raise before me the representation of the *Revenge*, of which the only object left in remembrance is "the black man," Zanga. Below, the butchers gave place to toymen and gingerbread-bakers. At present, the upper story is unfloored, the lower nearly deserted by the butchers, and their shops occupied by needy peddling dealers in small wares; in truth, a most deplorable contrast to what once was such a point of allurements. In the areas encompassing the market-building were booths for jugglers, prize-fighters, both at cudgels and back-swords; boxing-matches and wild beasts. The sports not under cover were mountebanks, fire-eaters, ass-racing, sausage-tables, dice-ditto, up-and-downs, merry-go-rounds, bull-baiting, grinning for a hat, running for a shift, hasty-pudding eaters, eel-divers, and an infinite variety of other similar pastimes.'

This account may be relied on, as Carter was born and passed his youthful days in Piccadilly (at 'Carter's Statuary'), two doors from the south end of White Horse-street.

Another of the Fair attractions was in a front one-pair room in Sun Court, [on the south side of Curzon-street,] where a Frenchman exhibited 'the astonishing strength of the *Strong Woman*, his wife,' which John Carter has very minutely described, and authenticated: he

tells us—a blacksmith's anvil being procured from White Horse-street, with three of the men, they brought it up, and placed it on the floor. The woman was short, but most beautifully and delicately formed, and of a most lovely countenance. She first let down her hair, (a light auburn,) of a length descending to her knees, which she twisted round the projecting part of the anvil, and then, with seeming ease, lifted the ponderous weight some inches from the floor. After this, a bed was placed in the middle of the room; when reclining on her neck, and uncovering her bosom, the husband ordered the smiths to place thereon the anvil, and forge upon it a horse-shoe! This they obeyed: by taking from the fire a red-hot piece of iron, and with their forging-hammers completing the shoe with the same might and indifference as when in the shop in their constant labour. The prostrate fair one seemed to endure this with the greatest composure, talking and singing during the whole process: then, with an effort, which, to the bystanders appeared supernatural, she cast the anvil from off her body, jumping up at the same moment, with extreme gaiety, and without the least discomposure of her dress or person. That there was no trick or collusion was obvious from this evidence of Mr. Carter: 'The spectators stood about the room, our family and friends; the smiths were strangers to the Frenchman, but known to us.' The Strong Woman* next put her naked feet on a red-hot salamander, which feat, by the way, did not surprise the narrator.

Another celebrity of the Fair was the celebrated gingerbread vendor, dressed in laced cocked-hat and feather, embroidered coat, ruffles, and white silk stockings, but better known by his cry of Tiddy Diddy, Doll-loll, loll loll. There was also a satiric exhibition of puppets beheading puppets in a coal-shed—in

allusion to the recent punishment of the Scotch chieftain, Lord Lovat.

Pennant, (who died in 1798,) tells us that he remembered the last celebrations of May Fair: 'The place was covered with booths, temporary theatres, and every enticement to low pleasure.' The Fair was finally discontinued at the instance of George, sixth Earl of Coventry, who disturbed with the riot and uproar of the place in the rear of his house in Piccadilly, procured the abolition of the Fair: his lordship died in 1809.

We now part with the history of the Fair, and turn to the period at which it became a fashionable locality. Much of the ground was built upon as early as 1704, when certain individuals, living in a place called 'May Fair,' are rated, for the first time, to the poor of the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. In the same books, under the year 1708, is the following entry:—'Mr. Sheppard, for the ground-rent of the Faire, market, and one house, 1*l.* 1*s.*' And, in the year 1709, a rate is paid to the poor by 'Christopher Reeves, for the playhouse in the fair.'*

In the *London Journal*, 27th May, 1721, it is stated—'The ground on which May Fair formerly stood is marked out for a large square, and several fine streets and houses are built upon it.'

From the above Sheppard, Shepherd's Market derives its name.† He built and resided in the long white garden-house, on the north side of Curzon-street, 'for many years inhabited by Lady Fane, and afterwards by Lady Reade, who died in it.' In 1750, Mr. Sheppard offered to sell the above freehold house and garden for the small sum of 500*l.*, and after the death of Lady Reade the property was purchased by Lord Carhampton for that sum. His Lordship, having greatly improved the house, sold it,

* Cunningham's Handbook of London, 2nd edit., p. 327.

† In 'the now bygone faces of 'The Lady and the Devil,' one of the characters, in a far-off country, sits down to write home to his dear love, Sal Hartshorn, in Shepherd's Market.

* Mr. Daniel thinks the Strong Woman to have been Mrs. Allchorne, who died in Drury-lane in 1817, at a very advanced age. Madame also performed at Bartholomew Fair in 1752.—See 'Merrie England,' &c.

with the garden, to Mr. Stuart Wortley, afterwards Lord Wharncliffe, for 13,000*l.* (*J. T. Smith.*) Over against this property is Curzon Chapel, within ten yards of which was 'Keith's Chapel,' a place of great notoriety: both edifices are shown in the distance of the accompanying engraving. The Rev. Alexander Keith, the proprietor of the smaller chapel, was a disgrace to his cloth, and was indifferent to all objects but money and notoriety; by his conduct subjecting himself to ecclesiastical censure, and in 1743, to a public excommunication. Keith, however, excommunicated in return the bishop of the diocese; Dr. Andrews, the judge; and Dr. Trebeck, the rector of St. George's, Hanover-square. Keith's principal vocation was the performance of secret marriages at a minute's notice: they became almost as notorious as the Fleet marriages—6,000 in one year; the busiest period of this illicit trade being Fair-time. The cunning with which he contrived to advertise this traffic in connexion with a domestic beverment is ingenious.

'We are informed,' says the *Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 23rd, 1750, 'that Mrs. Keith's corpse was removed from her husband's house in May Fair, the middle of October last, to an apothecary's in South Audley-street, where she lies in a room hung with mourning, and is to continue there till Mr. Keith can attend her funeral. The way to Mr. Keith's chapel is through Piccadilly, by the end of St. James's-street, and down Clarges-street, and turn on the left. The marriages (together with a license on a five-shilling stamp and certificate) are carried on for a guinea, as usual, any time till four in the afternoon, by another regular clergyman, at Mr. Keith's little chapel in May Fair, near Hyde Park Corner, opposite the great chapel, and within ten yards of it; there is a porch at the door like a country church porch.'

In the second volume of Horace Walpole's *Letters* (*Cunningham's ed.*) is some amusing gossip about Keith. Here is the story of Handsome Tracy, who was inveigled into marrying the butterwoman's daughter, in Craven-street. Tracy consented to dine with her: 'the mother,' says Walpole, 'borrowed some silver to buy a leg of mutton,

and they kept the eager lover drinking till twelve at night, when a chosen committee waited on the faithful pair to the minister of May Fair. The doctor was in bed, and swore he would not get up to marry the King, but he had a brother over the way who perhaps would, and who did.' Of Keith's preaching it is told that in his sermon on the death of Frederick Prince of Wales, he said 'he had no great parts, but he had great virtues; indeed, they degenerated into vices: he was very generous, but I hear his generosity has ruined a great many people: and then his condescension was such, that he kept very bad company.' And, when Keith, 'the marriage-broker,' was told the bishops would hinder his marrying, he replied, 'Well, let 'em,' but that he would be revenged, and buy two or three acres of ground, and 'underbury them all!'

In this chapel, James, fourth Duke of Hamilton, was married to the youngest of the beautiful Miss Gunnings. The Duke fell in love with her at a masquerade, and determined to marry her in the spring. Walpole, writing to Sir Horace Mann, Feb. 27, 1752, says:

'About a fortnight since, at an immense assembly at my Lord Chesterfield's, made to show the house, which is really most magnificent, Duke Hamilton made violent love at one end of the room, while he was playing at pharaoh at the other end; that is, he neither saw the bank, nor his own cards, which were of three hundred pounds each; he soon lost a thousand. I own I was so little a professor in love, that I thought all this parade looked ill for the poor girl; and could not conceive, if he was so much engaged with his mistress as to disregard such sums, why he played at all. However, two nights afterwards, being left alone with her, while her mother and sister were at Bedford House, he found himself so impatient, that he sent for a parson. The doctor refused to perform the ceremony without licence or ring: the Duke swore he would send for the Archbishop—at last they were married with a ring of the bed-curtain, at half an hour after twelve at night, at May Fair chapel.'

Within two years, in 1754, the Marriage Act put an end to Keith's vocation: the records are carefully preserved; for, the registers of the

May Fair marriages, in three folio volumes, closely and clearly written, are kept with the parish-books of St. George's, Hanover-square.

Curzon-street is named after the ground-landlord, George Augustus Curzon, third Viscount Howe. Mr. Cunningham relates an interesting association of the street—that Sir Francis Chantrey when a young man, and undistinguished, lived in an attic in No. 24; and that here he modelled his head of Satan, and his bust of Earl St. Vincent. At this period of his life he derived his chief support from a Mrs. D'Oyley, who lived at No. 21. In the large house, No. 16, for many years resided Sir Henry Halford, the celebrated Court physician, under George III., George IV., William IV., and Queen Victoria. Sir Henry was twenty years President of the College of Physicians, and contributed much valuable information to the literature of his profession. In 1862, the above mansion was for sale, when the sum asked was 15,000*l.*, subject to a considerable ground-rent.

Chesterfield House and garden has been already incidentally mentioned. This magnificent mansion was built by Isaac Ware, for Philip, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, author of the celebrated Letters to his son: his boudoir he calls the gayest and most cheerful room in England, and his library the best; and his garden a scene of verdure and flowers not common in London. The columns

and the grand staircase were brought from Canons, the seat of the Duke of Chandos; and the copper-gilt lantern for 18 candles, was bought by Lord Chesterfield, at the sale at Houghton, the seat of Sir Robert Walpole. Lord Chesterfield died in this house in 1773. His spacious and beautiful library has 'the walls covered half way up with rich and classical stores of literature; above the cases are, in close series, the portraits of eminent authors, French and English, with most of whom he had conversed.' * * * * We shall never recall that princely room without fancying Chesterfield receiving in it a visit of his only child's mother—while probably some new favourite was sheltered in the dim mysterious little boudoir within—which still remains also in its original blue damask and fretted goldwork, as described in Madame de Monconseil. —*Quarterly Review*, No. 152.

With two more memories we conclude. In Chesterfield-street, almost within shade of the above mansion, once lived Beau Brummell; and at No. 27, Charles-street, a very small house, looking over the north wall, upon the garden of Chesterfield House—the finest private garden in London—lived Mr. Beckford, the author of *Vathek*,—in just such a loophole of retreat as delighted this man of taste and knowledge, 'run to seed in the gratification of extravagant freaks.'





Drawn by C. H. Bennett.

A QUIET RUBBER.

[See "Whist."]



See "W. H. A."

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A WHIST PARTY.



TO talk about whist now is to fetch groans from the ghost of poor old Sarah Battle: 'A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game.' The rigour of the game is gone. You may clean your hearth, and poke your fire, but you can't keep your partner from revoking, even if he does seem to be attending to the 'play.' It was different in Sarah Battle's days. Cards were cards then, and to sit down to a game of whist was to enter, body and soul, into a very serious transaction. Now-a-days people forsake cards to run after a parcel of pictures, and books, and magazines, and music. Even those who do still pretend to play have forgotten the good old long-winded game, and compromise themselves with short whist; so we must take society in London and elsewhere even as we find it; and if those 'flies who spoil the whole pot' will 'play at playing at cards,' if they will allow their atten-

tion to be distracted by mere ordinary affairs of this or another world, we, the old stagers, must needs comfort ourselves by the remembrance of the day when whist was a world also, sole, and self-contained. For whist is great. It may not be a nursery for emperors and field-mars-hals, as chess is said to be; but yet I think we may hold it to be equal to the production of a magistrate, or even a master in lunacy; for its proper study requires some foresight, and much discrimination.

But we need not wonder that the old faith in whist is fast disappearing. Everything in the present day is met by the two pass-words, 'What use?' and 'How soon?' The use of whist is a matter of personal feeling, and moreover, in its true form, it takes a long time to play; so we may fairly charge its neglect upon the impatience and cynicism of these latter days.

A gentleman, one not particularly

straitlaced in his opinions, told us to our face, the other day, that a pack of cards consisted but of 'fifty-two badly-printed bits of indifferent cardboard.' What could you say to such a man? It was idle to remind him of the harmless amusement and intellectual excitement therefrom springing; for he immediately referred us to the five thousand and fifty-two badly-printed passions which they brought into play. He affirmed that Collins's 'Ode' might have been written at the card-table, and that Le Brun's 'Passions' were evidently sketched in a gambling-house. We only mention this to show that the good old domestic, harmless, quiet, middle-class whist is looked at by a majority of the present generation from a point of view unknown to the old player.

Now, here is a game being played in a quiet, comfortable parlour. The four people engaged therein have for the time being devoted themselves somewhat earnestly to its development; and although the smiling gentleman to the left has made a few mistakes, I take this to be a tolerably fair sample of the sort of table we get in the present day. Evidently the point chosen is that most exciting one, 'the odd trick'; and if you take the trouble to look into the position of the game, you will find that the stout old gentleman who turns his back upon you has been quietly engaged in the task of what is called 'selling' his neighbours. They have, by means of some very, very old-world mystifications, been made to believe that the best cards have been played, and thereupon the elderly lady is somewhat gaily laying down her king, unaware of the fact that the ace in the hand of her inscrutable opponent is lying in wait to knock down his majesty. But not only is the old lady deceived into merriment,—her partner lightly pats the aged deceiver upon the shoulder; while opposite, even with a grim and disagreeable expression, sits one who waits impatiently to lose the game that is won. Mr. Inscrutable will secure the odd trick, and the game will be his. They will all cry shame on him for a treacherous dog; but they will none the less

have enjoyed the surprise his cunning has obliged them with.

Perhaps their faces are worth a little scrutiny. We are afraid they have not quite run the gamut of the 'Passions' in the high classic style of Mr. Collins, or indeed in any other manner; but you may be assured that the old lady has put her feet on the hassock, strongly resolved to relish her full measure of excitement, and that, moreover, she is getting what she wants. There is a roundness of face and chin, a shortness of nose, and a curling up of the corners of the eyes, that promises a great capacity for the enjoyment of the present moment. We are only sorry that as much cannot be said for the gentleman who is sitting on her right. To tell the truth, his features do not promise an agreeable partner for the rubber or for life. He is so evidently in the possession of somebody else's teeth, and his own head of hair has been so conspicuously 'paid for,' that if to that slightly inflamed nose we add a twinge of gout, or a bunion, or even a corn, and finish with an apparently lost game, we must perceive that this individual cannot possess at this moment the most equitable of tempers. In point of fact, all the really good humour is, as you see, on the losing side. The lady's partner to the left is a jocular man, and even somewhat given to that modern habit of violent punning, which I fear he has acquired from the Christmas burlesque. But the Inscrutable, the hero of the game, is neither a punster nor good-tempered. He tolerates his partner, and he puts up with his opponent, but he has a most undisguised contempt for them all; and if it had not happened to him to take this odd trick, goodness knows what might have been the consequences. How that double chin would have wagged!—how those eyebrows would have receded into the forehead!—how that under lip would have held a confidential colloquy with that great and irascible nose, no one can tell. For the game is now over, the cards are to be put away, and they must all go down to supper.

ALL OVER LONDON.



I PRESENT myself to you as a man with a grievance. Have you anything of that kind? But of course you have. Every one has. None of us are without some Frankenstein, moral or physical. Still, allow me to say that yours must be a very excessive and abominable grievance, if able to challenge comparison with mine: I don't believe you can match it. It's a miserable consolation at the best; but I rather pride myself upon my misery as a peculiarly fine one. I flatter myself it's original.

One brilliant summer afternoon, I was strolling through one of our principal thoroughfares, and, for want of better amusement, presently stopped to look at a large collection of stereoscopic slides attractively displayed in a shop window. The pastime was somewhat dreary, and singularly deficient in interest,

until, to my utter amazement and indignation, I discovered *myself* as one of a gorgeously got-up group engaged in the solemn proceedings of a quadrille. I looked again—rubbed my eyes—said it couldn't be—but, no! the villainous fact remained—there was no mistake about it. By some atrociously surreptitious process my features had been transferred—I was doing *L'Été* in a most excruciating way. My companions were far from possessing the stamp of gentle birth, or even average respectability; on the contrary, there was an unmistakeable vulgarity about them. They looked for all the world just what they evidently were—a set of Bohemians dressed and attitudinized, at so much per head, per diem, in order to depict the presumed socialities of fashionable life. The whole thing was arranged to form a very im-

posing tableau. Of course the male performers were habited in the accepted, time-honoured, yet withal hideous garniture known by the title of 'evening dress':—the genius of the photographic artist was upon this question necessarily confined—but the representatives of the Marchioness So-and-So, the Ladies This and That, and the Misses What-you-please, were overpoweringly attired. The room was tremendous in colouring and gold; there were multitudes of wax-candles in miraculous sconces, which I strongly suspect formed a portion of some theatre 'properties'; and in one corner were to be observed a couple of long-haired musicians giving musical measure by the aid of pianoforte and cornet. Through an open door, the eye travelled down a fading vista of corridor illuminated by the flitting to and fro of elaborate flunkies, one of whom was bending reverentially forward with a tray, from which a young lady in light-blue was elegantly removing some refreshment, striving as much as possible to appear perfectly oblivious of Jeames's presence—such a method of proceeding being quite the thing in polite society.

You may judge, from this description, that the general effect was superb, and would have been entirely so, only that the apartment was about the size of an ordinary bath-room. In this, however, there was a fair amount of truthfulness; for does not Mrs. Chester Digby Plantagenet, Mrs. Walsingham Howard Percy, and the rest, contrive to bring about a hospitable asphyxia by the process of inviting a hundred and fifty guests into a space of twenty-four feet by eighteen?

But how on earth had I got into this hideous caricature of the 'upper ten thousand'? Why was I made to do duty in it? How had it come to pass? Here was I—Vandeleur Pemberton Mowbray—mixed up with the *employés* of a rascally photographer—literally forced into their company—made to posture delicately before the admiring eyes of a large coarse-looking woman in a gold tiara and ostrich plume. Vastly pleasant, forsooth! Why of course

my acquaintances would recognize it, and I should be more than suspected of hiring myself out at five shillings a day. What would be the use of my attempting explanation and denial? Horrible thought! And then that abominable Baster, with his infamous puns and insane efforts to be witty! Why I shall be driven half mad! He's sure to find it out!

I must confess that I became very free in speech—my mutterings spoke of Mephistopheles under a more euphonious appellative—five syllables is too much for a man in a passion—I was content with two, for which, in consideration of the exciting cause, I trust you will absolve me. It's no use saying, 'Oh! you must have been mistaken.' I tell you I was miserably convinced. Do you mean to say I don't know my own whiskers? Ah! that was what the wretch coveted.

But this was only the initiative of my ghastly experience. I suddenly reasoned upon the strong probabilities of being present in some other festive scene, and I was not long in discovering my fears to be lamentably realized. Just above the ball-room affair I found myself at a dinner-party. I was evidently a pet with the artist, for I presided at one end of the prandial board: I was carving, and Jeames (the same creature who was supplying jellies to the aristocratic young person in blue) was behind my chair. The parties here concerned were of a graver cast than those immortalized in the *soirée dansante*. The respectability of mature years seemed to be realized. Severe-looking gentlemen, in white waistcoats—a brace of military men, in *regimentals*—ponderous old ladies, in turbans and brocaded silks; and a sprinkling of youth and beauty. But this was not all. In another slide I was handing an enchanting damsel out of a boat. In another I was holding the arrows of a bewitching toxophilite. Then again I was at a tea-fight, going about with muffins: in fact, I was all over the window. My anathemas became more vehement and less suppressed in tone, and in a tole-

able state of irritation I walked into the shop, determined to probe this audacious robbery of my features to the utmost. But I had misgivings from the first as to the satisfactory result of inquiry.

In an authoritative, hasty manner I desired to see their collection of stereoscopic groups. I noticed that the attendant observed my abrupt method of conveying the request; but I was quickly supplied with a large stock. I soon found one of my own especials, and sought its reverse, in order to discover the name and whereabouts of my enemy, but, just as I expected, there was no address whatever. I examined others, with the like result; and finding that I was so far foiled in my endeavours to fasten on my villain, I inquired from the shopman the source of these specimens. He seemed surprised at the tone I adopted, but informed me that they had them from a wholesale house.

'Be so good,' said I, 'as to tell me at once *what* wholesale house.'

The attendant called his master, to whom I repeated my request.

'May I ask, sir,' replied he, 'why you wish me to give you that information? But, excuse me—and he looked a little puzzled—haven't I seen your face before?'

'Something very much like it, I believe;—there's the rascality of the thing. Just look here, sir!'—as with an indignant look I directed his attention to one of my immortalizings.

His recognition of the portraiture was immediate, and his face wore a dubious expression as to the suitable line of conduct and reply.

'Of course,' I said, 'you don't mean to deny that that is my resemblance; and I should like to know who has dared to take such a liberty.'

'Well, I must say, sir,' he replied, 'that I should not have supposed you to be one of our gentlemen, as we call them.'

'I should think not, indeed. Then how is it that I am in that picture, and in several others?' said I, hastily selecting some additional evidences, and handing them to him.

'Really, sir, I know nothing about it. It seems strange, I must confess.'

'Will you favour me by saying whether such a trick could be managed?'

He was not a photographer, and did not know.

'Well, have you ever heard that such a thing is possible?' I continued.

I saw that the wretch could say more than he chose; but he still fell back upon his presumed ignorance of the art. It was useless persevering any longer with him. He gave me the address of the wholesale house, and thither I at once departed; went over the same ground with the people there, and pressed the matter more stringently than I had done at the retail emporium. In truth I was in a positive rage, and insisted upon an elucidation of the mystery. All I got was a declaration that those slides of which I complained came from France. The rascals! they saw they were in a difficulty, and so fenced with it in every possible way. I asked for the name of their Paris correspondent, and so forth—that inquiry bringing nothing more than an assertion that they could not say whether the artist had direct connection with the house in question, or only sold to them; also that at that moment they could not exactly tell me the particulars. Of course theirs was a system of equivocation: I hinted as much in no very enigmatical terms, and left the place, vowing I would make them suffer for my annoyance.

Now I suppose you will desire me to give you some ideas of my own as to this inscrutable appearance of my lineaments. All I can say is, that in every case where I am made to do duty the expression of my features and position of countenance is precisely the same. Make what you can out of that. Of course the attitudes of body are various. In some rascally way, I suppose, my head is stuck upon another man's shoulders. One of the fire-shilling professionals does the posturing, and is then decapitated, my upper elegancies supplying the

place. I can't tell you *how* it's done—I merely give you my suspicion. If you can tell me a better method of explaining the villany, why I shall be grateful.

On my way through the Strand and Regent Street I had the curiosity to examine nearly every window containing stereoscopic slides, the result being that in most instances I was intensely delighted by a recognition of myself. Oh, it was quite clear: I was all over London! and of course I had travelled into the provinces. My reputation as a photographic model was a great fact.

Three days after this pleasant discovery I met the atrocious Baster in Regent Street. The moment he stopped I knew my fate. He looked at me with a theatrically melancholic air, carefully got up for the occasion, and said—

'Mowbray, my boy, I have been longing to tell you how confoundedly sorry I am.'

'Sorry for what?' replied I, savagely.

'Oh! don't be regardless of the eternal friendship of Baster, whose soul was grieved within him when constrained to believe that Mowbray was hard up.'

'Confusion take you! What are you driving at?'

'Ah! there it is again—won't confide in Baster, who, when he knew of the miserable contingency, groaned in the miserable torture of his manly heart!'

'I tell you what it is, Baster,' said I, in wrathful tones.

'Oh! what! angry with Baster? But, do tell me, does the photographer stand sandwiches and bottled beer as an elegant refectory in the middle of the day? And when do you begin, and what are the hours?'

'I know what you're after, Baster; but it's a rascally plot. Don't venture to say that you believed me to resort to such a means of obtaining a livelihood;' and I looked defiant.

'My dear fellow, I am far from wishing to offend such a chosen spirit of my heart as Mowbray; but be frank with Baster. Do; there's a good fellow! Baster wants to

know all about it. Baster has been extravagant lately, and is very likely to go in for the same sort of thing. Who knows?'

'You are pretending not to understand me. I tell you it's a vile trick.'

'Well, then, commend me to the photographic body for excellent faculties of inventive appropriation. Of course, Baster never doubts Mowbray's word.'

'I feel very much inclined——'

'To attack your faithful Baster. I see you do. I notice the eye as dangerous. Oh, the ingratitude of humanity! I shall be off; for I will not be instrumental in making you the victim of a lifelong remorse.'

'You're an ass, Baster!'

'There! he's calling me names; and what for, I should like to know. I merely utter the words of friendship—Baster's friendship!—and I am called names——'

'You insane clown! But, there—you are to be pitted.'

'Kind of Mowbray. But, now, I really wish to know whether that airloin is a verity, or only a beautifully-painted wooden myth? and the turkey—is it a gastronomic bird, or only an economic substitute? and the piano, and the cornet, are they real, or dummy? And, oh! one word more. Is it true that you are engaged to one of the professional young ladies? I ask from a deep feeling of interest. Ten shillings a day between you—not so bad—that's three 'pounds a week. And, Mowbray——'

But I would not stand any more of it; so, calling him a confounded fool, rushed off in a very irate state of mind. Fine chance for such a mountebank as Baster: pleasant to be at his mercy!

The storm thickened around me from day to day. At an evening party I was assailed by inquiries highly calculated to contribute to my enjoyment. Young ladies had seen me, and wanted to hear all about it. I have no doubt the wretch Baster gloried in spreading my discomfiture. In fact, I know it was one of his grand resorts. Then I had letters from

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friends in the country, confirming my preconceived notions of provincial celebrity. Altogether I am in a pretty mess.

Will you tell me what I am to do? I have threatened the wholesale establishment with legal proceedings—I have even employed the detective police to find out the author of this nefarious scheme, but he is still—'wanted.' To be sure, I have so far frightened some of the craft that they have promised to keep me out of sight; but how will this avail, even supposing that in some instances the promise is adhered to? I can't watch the entire British kingdom. I have had some vague notions of buying up all my horrors; but I don't, on reflection, see how that could be managed. Sometimes I think I will employ an

agent to travel about continually, and attack all he can see, from John o' Groats to the Land's End. Then, again, I decide upon making a personal tour of inspection: but I cannot discover anything positively remedial. The mischief seems to be done. It is an abominable Hydra.

I told you at starting that I had a grievance. And now you know what it is, I beg to ask what you think of it? What am I to do? There appears to me only one remedy in the present, and one hope in the future. I must either lose a grand individuality by shaving off my whiskers at once, or I must in patience wait for the time when my stereoscopic renown shall be forgotten in the advance of age.

P. E.

MY KING.

(A slightly altered imitation of 'My Queen.' See p. 448.)

WHEN and how shall I meet him? if ever,
What are the words he first will say?
How will the barriers now that sever
Our kindred spirits be broken away?
This self-same daylight on him is shining,
Shining somewhere the while I sing,
The only one who, my will resigning,
Could I acknowledge my King, my King.
Whether his hair be golden or raven,
Whether his eyes be dark or blue,
I know not now; but 'twould be engraven
On that white day as my perfect hue.
Many a face I have liked for a minute—
Been chain'd by a voice with a pleasant ring—
But ever and aye there was something in it,
Something that could not be his, my King.
I will not dream of him handsome and strong,
My ideal love may be weak and slight;
It matters not to what class he belong,
He would be noble enough in my sight;
He may not be brilliantly gifted, my Lord!
And he may be learned in everything;
But if ever he comes he will strike the chord,
Whose melody waits for the hand of its King.
But he must be courteous toward the lowly,
To the weak and sorrowful, loving too;
He must be courageous, refined, and holy,
By nature exalted, and firm, and true:
To such I might fearlessly give the keeping
Of love that would never outgrow its spring:
There would be few tears of a woman's weeping,
If they loved such men as my King, my King.

THOUGHTS OVER A PICTURE AND A PIPE,

Thrown into Verse.

* Dulci meditatur avenâ.*

(Illustrated by M. T. Lawless.)

WELL have you limned, Mr. Lawless,
 This young disciple of Raleigh's,
 Sure 'tis The Cock where he sits,
 Listening the jests of the wits,
 With that half-smile on his face,
 Seated apart in the place,—
 Head on one side, eyes askance,
 Noting with curious glance
 Johnson the burly and big,
 Wearing that seedy old wig,
 Jestng at little Pioszi,
 Tilting at coxcomby Bozzy.
 Or is it Goldsmith he spies,
 Laughing—with tears in his eyes,
 And in vest-pocket the guinea
 He'll give you for asking, the ninny.
 How on poor Noll they all doat,
 Drest in that plum-coloured coat!
 Or is he thinking on Savage,
 How want has worked its wild ravage,

Or how to Garrick's keen face
 Genius lends fire, blent with grace?

Or by a casement flung ope
 Sits he, to smoke and to tope,
 Lazily casting an eye
 Over the stream, flowing by,—
 Merchant, thief, beggar, and beau,
 Passing—one ne'er-ending show?
 He rests, contented in soul,
 While the blue smoke from the bowl,
 Wavering up through the air,
 Perfume diffuses so rare!

Shall I to tell you pretend
 What are the thoughts of our friend,
 Taking his pipe and his dram,
 Water-dilute, of Schiedam?
 These are his fancies, I'm thinking,
 As he sits smoking and drinking.

Old Ralph Ransome sailed the sea—
 Sailed the whole vast ocean through—

And returning brought to me

These rare cakes of Honeydew.

Blessings on old Raleigh's head—

Though upon the block it fell—

For the knowledge he first spread

Of the herb I love so well!

'Tis a talisman defies

All that care and want can do.

There are few things that I prize

Like Ralph Ransome's Honeydew!

Tell me not of lotos-plants—

How the lotos-eaters lay

Lazily in shady haunts

Dreaming all their time away!

There's a drowsier charm in this

Than in lotos:—if indeed

That same plant nought other is

Than the soothing Indian weed:—

Were it not, in truth then if

I were of Ulysses' crew

I'd far rather have a whiff

Of Ralph Ransome's Honeydew!

Pence to old Ralph Ransome's bones

Wheresoever they are lain,

In some island of the zones,

In the distant Spanish main.

This Nepenthe, which he brought,

Only careful memories ends—

Does not drown one kindly thought

Of my rarest of old friends.

As I muse thus, lapt in bliss,

Upward floats the vapour blue—

The apotheosis this

Of Ralph Ransome's Honeydew.

XUM



Drawn by M. J. Lawless.

"HONEYDEW."

[See "Thoughts over a Picture and a Pipe."

THE ART OF THE FUTURE

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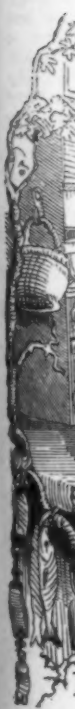


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 VOL. 1

CHIT-CHAT ABOUT COOKERY AND OTHER MATTERS.

BY MADAME ENTENTE CORDIALE.

'Les animaux se repaissent; l'homme mange; l'homme d'esprit seul sait manger.'—
BRILLAT-SAVARIN.

'L'art d'écrire et l'art des ragôts se sont singulièrement rapprochés.'—HOFFMAN.



THERE is nothing more common than to hear on all sides of the inferiority of English cookery—in fact, that, nationally, there is no such art as cookery in this country; that roasting and boiling meat, and producing dough puddings with fruit in the centre, is not cooking. It is equally common to find in the same society some British Lion who will assert that it is impossible in the whole world to find anything superior to what may be seen in

London in that line: that, of course, it costs money everywhere to do things handsomely, and so forth; and that though French cookery may be all very well (on State occasions, indeed, indispensable in this very same gentleman's house), it is too expensive for everyday life. The general company agreeing to this cannot help, however, comparing notes of their individual experience with reference to the expense of their table here compared to what

earthen vessel, and I do believe we have no right to contradict everybody. Of plates or crockery you see none—all are put away in a cupboard; for it is only half-past ten, and the family are at breakfast and the one maid-servant in the bedrooms. Water is brought from a tank outside every morning to fill a receptacle which they dignify by the name of 'fontaine,' but which is really a portable cistern.

But the principal object is a stove called a 'fourneau.' The fire is not seen, but above it are a number of circular openings just the proper size for the stewpans; and adapted to these openings are plates of metal, moveable, so that you may moderate the heat if too intense. There is an oven—sometimes two—and a boiler, but which in a French house is rarely self-filling. 'Dear me!' you say, 'we have as good grates here, for these people can never roast, I am sure.' Indeed, they do roast very well; and although your English range is a magnificent affair when you immolate a sheep and roast half or a quarter at once, yet it is very difficult, and to persons of moderate capacity impossible, to produce a delicate *béchamel* or *soubise* over a fire as hot as Hecla, and almost as unapproachable. Besides, as I am writing for ladies, I wish to show them how the art of cooking may perchance be made easy and pleasant to them. And certainly roasting one's own face is anything but agreeable.

I have therefore described this apparatus because it is so cheap and clean that any lady may commence amateur cookery with great advantage possessing such a stove, which may be purchased in London, of French manufacture, and put up in your kitchen at a cost of five pounds. I have no doubt there are also a variety of English and American stoves equally cheap, which can be introduced in addition to the ordinary orthodox English range. The French ladies, however, have an undeniable advantage over us in the constant use of charcoal, which is not procurable here in the same abundance.

Add to the foregoing description

of a French kitchen a walnut-wood table, three wooden chairs, a sink without a tap above, hanging on nails in the wall three or four towels or cloths, and a saw, hammer, and various other useful tools; and you have a true picture of what I saw in a lovely French villa, or as they call it, 'campagne,' on the banks of the Saône.

In that part of France, and I believe every other, the breakfast is late, though light. The French are early risers, seven being a common hour for families where no business is carried on. It is general, however, to take something very light indeed on rising, and you may hear the door of every room open one after the other, and its inmate call out, 'Marie, ma soupe;' or 'Marie, mon lait,' as the case may be: and then Marie flies upstairs, replying, 'À l'instant, madame;' or 'Tout de suite, monsieur;' and carries the said beverage. Between this hour, however, and breakfast proper a great deal of business is done. In Paris most people breakfast about twelve, theirs being a *déjeuner à la fourchette*, and prior to that lawyers, stockbrokers, merchants, &c., have transacted important business. When they return home to breakfast, the children are at school and half the affairs of domestic life are over for the day. The Parisians in easy circumstances then go out visiting or shopping, returning to dinner about five or six, so that they may be in time to enjoy the theatre; and thus you see they have rarely in any part of France (for the whole country imitates Paris) more than two meals a day.

The French consider it a very pernicious habit to eat so often as we do in England. 'Cela fatigue l'estomac' is their constant assertion. They study their health greatly, and indeed chiefly in relation to their food; or, rather, they think that their health principally depends on the care bestowed on the selection and preparation of their food, as well as in the judicious choice of the hours of their repasts. All classes of the French people have the greatest dread of

adulteration; and the government most strictly enforces severe penalties on all vendors as well as manufacturers of adulterated food, however slight may be the degradation of the material. Every article must be simply what it is called in all its purity; for example, wheat-flour must not contain potato, beans, or rice, but must be simply wheaten flour, coarse or fine according to price. They declare, and with truth, '*C'est mauvais pour l'estomac*,' for you swallow a certain amount of in-nutritious matter, fancying that you have eaten proper food, and thus weaken your digestion; and as they seek a certain kind of innocent pleasure in the act of feeding, they find that it is only by studying this subject that they can habitually eat the variety of dishes they every day see before them.

Any one who will for a year or two study and practise this art will find that you may have a greater variety of wholesome food cooked at less expense on the French system than on the English. Many persons have an idea that variety in food is objectionable. I cannot think so: sameness palls in food as in all other things, and by a healthy variation the appetite is better maintained; but no one can refrain from wonder at the astonishing apathy of the English public under the terrible robbery they submit to by the open adulteration of most articles of food in everyday consumption. In vain do the most celebrated analytical chemists denounce this or that; the British Lion declares that his father swallowed it all his life without complaining; why should he, forsooth, want anything better? This apathy checks all improvement, all hope of progress (in other matters, too, unfortunately); so our little children continue to eat bread whitened with alum, and add sand as well as sugar to their pudding.

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a week, and is generally bought by the bag—I suppose about a hundredweight. It is the only way to secure its excellence, and, besides, costs less. Be sure to buy two sorts, as it is better mixed. Mocha and Bourbon in France: in England, if you can procure it, buy Mocha and Jamaica, but avoid Ceylon, and remember the smaller the berry the better the flavour. The radishes on this breakfast-table are unlike those you see here: climate and soil greatly improve them. They were also sent to table in the prettiest way possible, looking like a shell full of tulips, the dishes for them being made purposely in that shape, and called '*raviers*.' It is done thus: the leaves are taken off, the top just flattened, and then with a sharp penknife the red part is cut in longitudinal strips, left just hanging at the bottom like the calix of a flower.

This operation and all other such were performed by the youngest daughter, who had just left her convent, followed by the blessings of the one hundred and twenty nuns, who instructed more than three hundred young ladies. She declares they give all their pupils the same advice—viz., to learn with diligence everything connected with household matters that they may make good wives; and by no means ever to return there, except as visitors to their dear old governesses, or to bring their own children in time to come.

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I do not now propose to give any

earthen vessel, and I do believe we have no right to contradict everybody. Of plates or crockery you see none—all are put away in a cupboard; for it is only half-past ten, and the family are at breakfast and the one maid-servant in the bedrooms. Water is brought from a tank outside every morning to fill a receptacle which they dignify by 'the name of 'fontaine,' but which is really a portable cistern.

But the principal object is a stove called a 'fourneau.' The fire is not seen, but above it are a number of circular openings just the proper size for the stewpans; and adapted to these openings are plates of metal, moveable, so that you may moderate the heat if too intense. There is an oven—sometimes two—and a boiler, but which in a French house is rarely self-filling. 'Dear me!' you say, 'we have as good grates here, for these people can never roast, I am sure.' Indeed, they do roast very well; and although your English range is a magnificent affair when you immolate a sheep and roast half or a quarter at once, yet it is very difficult, and to persons of moderate capacity impossible, to produce a delicate *béchamel* or *soubise* over a fire as hot as Hecla, and almost as unapproachable. Besides, as I am writing for ladies, I wish to show them how the art of cooking may perchance be made easy and pleasant to them. And certainly roasting one's own face is anything but agreeable.

I have therefore described this apparatus because it is so cheap and clean that any lady may commence amateur cookery with great advantage possessing such a stove, which may be purchased in London, of French manufacture, and put up in your kitchen at a cost of five pounds. I have no doubt there are also a variety of English and American stoves equally cheap, which can be introduced in addition to the ordinary orthodox English range. The French ladies, however, have an undeniable advantage over us in the constant use of charcoal, which is not procurable here in the same abundance.

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I do not now propose to give any

one an idea of a French 'home.' If I did, how I should astonish many of my very best and most respectable friends! Some, of course, in whose families intermarriages have taken place, know a good deal about it, but the generality of good honest English folks, who think the domestic virtues cannot or do not exist beyond their fog-bound land, would not believe me. Think of a country where you never hear of a son speak of his father as 'governor' or 'old boy,' and where every father, however humble, blessed with a trade, pinches himself for years to put by some trifling dowry for his daughter as an act of justice not only to her, but to the future son-in-law!

I have been led into this digression by the recollection of Madame de G——'s delightful Sundays. On Saturday mornings she always betook herself to town to order what was necessary for the week; and as this very next Sunday was graced by the presence of the English cousin, Madame B—— de C——, due honour was purposed to the guest. Madame de G—— dined and spent the Saturday with her daughter; and in the cool of this early September evening returned home with her two grandchildren and their nurse. This was, of course, the day of days for the children; and their 'bonne maman' (as grandmothers are always called) was to them the potent dispenser of every privilege and delight. Children in France in the middle classes have no nursery, no prison away from their parents, of which a cross nurse is the gaoler. These children, aged six and four, dined every day with their parents; and if absent for half an hour, would surely be inquired for.

Pardon this digression. It will, however, show you how gradually from their earliest childhood French women are initiated into the system of domestic management, and at how tender an age they are aware that in time they must superintend *la cuisine*; that they, too, one day must make an intelligent cook out of a raw mountain-girl, who must be tutored into a due consideration

of the importance of her own digestion that she may not torture her employers by unwholesome meases.

Sunday having dawned, these early risers rose earlier than ever, because, being devout, religious people, everybody went to mass at some hour or other. The servants and the tiny children went at seven o'clock in the morning. At eleven the mother, father, and daughter went to high mass; but before that hour Madame de G—— had, to use a very homely phrase, seen everything *en train*.

The weather was still too warm for a thrifty French housewife to eat or set before her guests soup made the day before. 'One can easily rise a little earlier,' said Madame de G——. So their excellent, clear soup, of that bright amber colour which never blesses your longing sight or palate in an English house, was *en train* before Marie went to mass, and the charcoal fire had done no mischief when she returned.

'I cannot imagine,' said Madame B—— de C——, 'how this soup is made. It is clear every day, and so perfectly bright and transparent. Polidore has often described it, but in our house we only manage to give him something black or blackly reddish. When I fancy it is better than usual, and ask triumphantly what he can desire more, he says, condescendingly, "Ma bonne amie, tu fais de ton mieux, mais ce n'est pas du tout cela," and sometimes I am really cross. But if this is what he wants, poor man, I pity him, for he has never seen it since he left France. One day I made, or rather caused to be made (for, alas! I can do nothing), something, as I thought, superexcellent. Judge what I felt when he positively could not swallow it! I explained that it contained wine and spice, herbs, butter and flour, and sundry other ingredients; upon which he laughed most heartily, and said he was not astonished at its being so horrible, for "il y avait là de quoi empoisonner tout un régiment."'

'There is nothing easier to make than this soup,' said Madame de G——. 'The fault of yours was

that you mixed too many things together. What you are eating contains, besides the meat and water, nothing but carrots and onions. You wasted your money and your pains.'

The corners of the table, besides the usual spoons, &c., as in England, had each a little shell-shaped dish. In one were radishes, in another butter, in another anchovies, in another 'thon,' which is a Mediterranean fish resembling, I should think, the sturgeon, pieces of which are pickled, and placed thus at dinner. These four corner-dishes are very small, and called *hors d'œuvres*. No dinner-table is laid without them, and they serve not to satisfy the appetite, but to excite it, and *pour passer le temps*; and a great blessing it is, for we all know the anxiety of the giver of a feast when an undue period elapses between the courses. The very hungriest Frenchman who wishes *hors d'œuvres*, and all such mockeries across the Channel, or in the middle of the Atlantic, will at last pick an anchovy to pieces rather than do nothing. And here let me recommend the adoption of a custom universal in France, but too much neglected here at the table of the English bourgeois. Whenever a plate is removed with one hand, with the other the servant should instantly place another before the guest. I remember, when a child, that matters were thus ordered at the table of my guardian, whose dinners and wines were unique. The fashion now seems to be to place beside each person six, eight, for aught I know in some houses twenty knives and forks. Whether this be to show off the silver, or that the servants think to save trouble, I know not; but it is certainly a most inconvenient arrangement.

In France they unfortunately do not change the knives and forks as often as the plates.

The soup being removed, the next thing served was a melon. Poor Madame B—— de C——, all English and well-bred as she was, could not eat melon as a *hors d'œuvre*—that is, with salt and

pepper. I must tell you this is quite the last fashion, and has been introduced by the numerous class who study their digestion so much. They say that melon can only hope to be properly digested in company with other food, and that, being so hard and cold itself, if eaten at the end of a repast, would retard the proper assimilation of all the other food, and I dare say they are right.

I really, by-the-by, forget whether the 'bouilli' (that is to say, the meat from which the soup is made) was eaten before the melon or not. 'What signifies?' you will say: 'surely it could not be worth much.' There I quite agree with you; for if the soup be good, the meat must of necessity be a shred, and *vice versa*; but, nevertheless, there are some of the daintiest gentlemen in France who cannot dine without this, the poor fare of any ploughman. In this case the company was not much to be pitied, for Madame de G—— had accomplished the benevolent wish of Henri IV.—she at least had '*poule au pôt le dimanche*.'

With all their theory of eating nothing useless, this is to them what bread and butter is to us; and how should we get on from the cradle to the grave without bread and butter? When I should otherwise be condemned to a cold-meat dinner I order mashed potatoes, and then attacking the bread and butter, I think I have the best of it altogether, especially if I can get some salad, and a pear or two for dessert. For my part I despise 'bouilli' with all the vehemence my pen can express; but my French cousins retort, 'If you had only decent bread!' and what can I say when I know that the 'Times,' the thunderer, the Jupiter of England, is always hammering about that very thing? and yet there is no chance of our getting Dr. Daugleish's bread for many a long day. Decidedly we are fools here, fools of the first magnitude, to eat the rubbish we do.

Has no one else ever been surprised at our national neglect of soup, bouillon, or whatever you like to call it? After a long cold

country ride or drive you alight at a friend's house, and they offer you wine and biscuits—nay more, they produce them, and most likely one person in two accepts the hospitality. In France, ten to one, wine in the morning is the last thing any one, especially a lady, would think of, but a 'bon bouillon' is a very different affair. Besides being *mauvais pour l'estomac*, wine, they would say, is worse even for the head; and not a few would tell you in plain terms, immoral and 'honteux' for any female to swallow it before dinner. Candidly, now, are they not right? Ridicule and revile the French nation when and where they deserve it; but in the name of common sense applaud and imitate their joyous sobriety, for truly in the matter of spirituous liquors they know how to be 'merry and wise.'

The most judicious beginning for dinner is soup: being a highly-nourishing compound, and exceedingly light, it diminishes the otherwise too great quantity of solids likely to be taken; but remember, reader—English reader I mean—their soup is not like yours, and as thoroughly unlike it as is the remainder of your dinner.

While we are on this subject I will enable you to put in practice a piece of excellent economy. Having made your soup with three large carrots, how many servants are there who, thinking *all the goodness is out of them*, throw them into the dust-hole in London, or to the chickens in the country. In future use them thus the next day: rub them through a colander or a wire sieve, add the remainder of the soup left from the previous day, and one table-spoonful of Carolina rice boiled quite soft. This will then be a 'purée à la Creci,' and should be of the consistency of pea-soup. Considering you would otherwise have wasted the carrots, find the value of one spoonful of rice, and then say how much your soup costs.

I must apologize now for the last time: not having undertaken to produce a philosophical treatise on food nor a book of 'professional cookery,' but only to gossip, I will endeavour

not to stray too much at random, but return at once to this Sunday dinner with these nice French people. When I remember how long they sat at table, I am consoled to think that my digression really has not occupied the time of one of their courses.

The *hors d'œuvres* being cleared away, there was served a pâté chaud, and being the commencement of the shooting season, the pâté was of game, and had the pretty name of 'une partie de chasse.' It was the grand 'plat' of the dinner, and such an expensive affair is rarely indulged in by persons of such moderate revenues. It of course came from a 'traiteur.' After all the contents had disappeared, the crust was cut up and handed round, each person partaking of it, and thus also are vol-au-vents served in France.

Then came the entrées. These are the dishes which, in our young days, the genuine old British Lion used to call 'kickshaws.' I need not give you the etymology of the word; but Frenchmen themselves know that their food is sometimes so disguised, that they are fain to exclaim now and then, 'C'est quelque chose de fort bon, mais vous dire son nom ne m'est pas possible.' First were handed round the very smallest mutton cutlets, just one for each person and one to spare, no more; indeed the children had scarcely half of one. They had a minute portion of everything that came to table, I do assure you, and behaved with great propriety. They asked for nothing, because they knew they would taste all. One thing succeeded another, but not with haste, quite as much time being spent in talking as in eating. The remainder of the dinner consisted of a delicious ragout of sweetbread and sorrel, quails and a roast fowl finishing the dinner. The roast, whatever it may be, is always eaten the last, and few families ever have fish except on Friday and Saturday, when it is a rule of their church to abstain from flesh meat.

The entremets—that is, dishes served between the entrées of meat, &c.—were various vegetables cooked à la Française, that is, each with

some seasoning or sauce, not plainly boiled in water as here. I can hardly describe their amazement to hear of any one eating vegetables without any 'assaisonnement' whatever. Not even oil and vinegar! not even a *persillade*! Madame B—— de C—— amused them not a little by narrating her husband's astonishment at the first dinner he was invited to in London, it being only the usual Sunday dinner of his English cousins at Brompton—I beg pardon, South Kensington.

'Ma chère amie,' he began, 'there was an enormous dish with a very bright cover, a sauceboat, and a smaller dish, but no soup.'

'C'est égal,' said I, mentally, 'Polidore, mon ami, you must be weaned from your soup.'

'So off came the cover and displayed a splendid piece of salmon, to a large piece of which I was helped with some sauce, made of lobster, and quite red all through. It was strange to me but looked very good, and in effect I was not disappointed, except in one thing, I should have preferred helping myself, for Mrs. W—— gave me more than double what I should have taken; and being the most hospitable, kind woman imaginable, I ate it for fear she should think I did not like my reception. Only, ma foi, I was obliged to decline the boiled potatoes. Next, my dear, the table being small and the dishes very large, we were cramped for room at the next course. Two of these gigantic 'plats,' with large covers, were placed on the table, and two smaller ones also, and I began to think the dinner would be quite wonderful. When the covers were raised, we had two roast fowls, half an immense ham boiled, boiled potatoes again, and boiled cauliflower. I made, no doubt, an excellent dinner; but when I reflected that the pudding which followed (the classic plum-pudding) was boiled too, and also the custards, I was lost in astonishment. It was not from economy, nor from any idea of elegance that they thus avoided variety; and this heavy repast must have cost much more than those "gentil petits diners" so common in my own country.'

'But,' said Mad. de G——, 'as they were only four at that house, why did they have two fowls roasted? Surely one would have been enough; the other might have been better replaced by something quite different; an entrée, for instance.'

'Ah! my dear aunt,' said Madame B—— de C——, 'you could not get one servant in fifty to do that. For instance: the dinner we have to-day could not be sent to an English table in a house where there was only one regular servant as here.'

'Of course I know that now,' said Madame de G——; 'you, my dear, are our illustration of modern domestic education in England. Everything connected with mental culture has been pushed very far; but as for any idea of wholesome food for the body, you have yet everything to learn.'

'I don't know that,' returned Madame B—— de C——; 'we consider plain food the most wholesome, and I believe even here the physicians would say the same. Why, the lady who called on you yesterday mentioned that her doctor had ordered her to dine from one dish only.'

'Do you know what one dish means here? Soup, you know, counts for nothing,' said Madame de G——; 'our friend would not deny herself a *hors d'œuvre* or a salad, or any vegetable; these may all be eaten by her. The prohibition is mainly, I fancy, to deceive her into eating something; for it is just possible, if not ordered to eat of this one dish, this particular patient would try not to eat anything solid. She will take her wine and water as usual, and her dessert. Now is this what you mean in England by one dish?'

'Certainly not. In England it would mean as much roast mutton or beef as you can eat, and boiled potatoes, probably beer, too.'

'Well now in France we should think that a coarse heavy dinner, and unfit for any one except a man taking violent exercise, and I fancy our doctors would not recommend it. The great quantity of nourishment in roast meat, especially eating as much as you want at a time without any other food, I should consider

really injurious to the greater number of persons. But habit, of course, renders it indispensable to your countrymen.'

'But you know,' said Madame B—— de C——, 'I really don't think the English care so much as you for the pleasures of the table.'

This was a most unfortunate remark. Gentlemen in France commonly leave a good deal of conversation to the ladies; and I never remember to have heard a lengthened dialogue at table to the exclusion of ladies, but on this occasion there was immediately a chorus of dissentient voices from the male part of the company. It however subsided into this question: How is it possible to maintain the proposition that the English disdain the pleasures of the table, when the fact is notorious that eating public dinners is as much a social custom in London as it was at Sparta? With this additional fact that the custom there was deemed a bore, and here it is considered a treat and sometimes very good fun. Nothing can be done without spending (as a mere preliminary act) a small fortune in a dinner. Whether the meeting be to help the originator of a charitable design or to bestow on another the applause and testimonial commemorative of the completion of his successful efforts for the public good, a dinner must take place and be paid for, and therefore, say our French cousins, 'You ought to study the science of dinner-giving.'

We all know that fashionable folks, or, as some express it, great people, live after the French pattern as regards their table; but why should not smaller folks, good, honest bourgeois in England, also eat French fare if they like it? They could then abolish the present system of 'great spreads,' about as vulgar as their name in modern phraseology. A good dinner now means a French dinner; and surely some change from the monotony of plain joints could be best begun at home, when a failure would not be very vexatious. When success crowns repeated efforts, the new dish could be placed before guests, and thus any moderately energetic young housekeeper

can train a servant to cook a little better than the rest, only it is necessary that she should herself know what she wants to teach, or there is no chance of a respectable dénouement.

To return. After the entrées and entremets are done with, a salad is invariably served, then cheese—generally two or three sorts. To this succeed the pastry, flans, custards, soufflets, charlottes, creams, &c., which figure in place of our pies and puddings; which latter, by-the-by, are now occasionally introduced in France, though in a most circum-spect manner. The day will most likely never arrive when that horrid thing, a currant dumpling, or that more horrid thing, a rhubarb pudding, will be seen on a French table. No! they adopt the delicate cabinet pudding or a baked custard, which, however, they do in their own way, in a saucepan, with burnt sugar sauce, and call a 'flan anglais au caramel.' It is a decided improvement on ours, and I may as well tell you how it is done to the best of my recollection.

Make an ordinary custard of six eggs to a pint of milk, leaving out three of the whites (which will make another very pretty dish), and, above all things, flavour the custard; nothing is so disappointing as insipid cookery; as Polidore says, 'Cela n'a ni vice ni vertu.' Have a small enamel-lined saucepan with a flat cover. Put into this a few lumps of white sugar and very little water, only sufficient to moisten the sugar, and let it be on the stove till it begins to assume a bright gold tinge. Then take it off or it will speedily be black. In a few seconds it will be a nice bright brown, and then add as much water as it will bear. It must not taste watery, neither must it be syrup; practice alone will guide you. Never mind wasting a few lumps of sugar, for your lesson in cooking will not be very expensive even then. You must turn and twist the saucepan about till the caramel (this is its name now) has touched the side all round, then pour in the custard, put on the lid, which you must strew with hot embers, and let it do gently

for about the same period you would bake it. It will turn out very well, and is a pleasing change. It is eaten as often cold as hot.

Well, but the whites of the eggs are left, and you must not waste them, therefore you must now produce another dish, called 'pommes meringuées.' Pare and cut up two apples, put them in a saucepan with a small piece of butter and some sugar, let them boil to a marmalade, then spread them on a small flat dish. While they are cooling, beat the eggs to a firm froth with some pounded sugar, and when quite stiff, with two dessert spoons shape this froth into meringues, which you must place side by side over the marmalade till you have covered it and completely hidden the apples. Strew pounded sugar very lightly over it, put it into a quick oven for a few minutes till crisp and bright yellow, and serve instantly. It is good for nothing cold. If you have a lemon at hand it will improve the flavour of the apples to put a little both of the rind and juice into the marmalade.

The last thing, of course, in a dinner is the dessert; and few persons perhaps know how useful a little fruit is in promoting digestion. Too much would be equally injurious after a full meal. Dessert, it seems, was a custom imported into France from Italy, from whence also they derived their first notions of elaborate and refined cookery. An Italian once said it was intended to 'puliziar la bocca' by the delightful juice of fruit after the various viands of the dinner. At any rate it is a grateful conclusion. This over, coffee is served sometimes at the dinner-table, sometimes in the drawing-room, or even in an arbour in the garden, but generally at the dinner-table, ladies and gentlemen retiring at the same time, as I am happy to say they often do now in London.

Any one can judge for himself what the cost of life in this house was; and whether, by good management and the avoidance of waste, it need be much greater here. My advice is, unless you particularly like cold meat three days out of six,

try little nicely-made dishes; let them be solid; begin with soup, season the vegetables a little cleverly, and if you waste nothing you will not find that you spent more than before.

The most important thing is to train a servant to cook properly, that being done, each *ménage* can practise display, or moderate economy, as circumstances may require.

History informs us that Madame de Genlis having been kindly received and very happy while on a visit to a German lady, made the best return in her power by teaching her how to cook eight different dishes in which she was an adept. What they were I have long been curious to know, and never could learn; no doubt there exist some ancient grandees whose reminiscences could furnish the information, but I don't think it is in print. Madame B—— de C——, however, declares that one thing she learned in France is more valuable to an English novice than Madame de Genlis's eight, unless they embraced this knowledge.

You may remember that at the opening of the preceding gossiping chapter, it is stated that people roast at a little wee-wee stove without any open fire. True, they call it roast, and you could never say a leg of lamb thus cooked was not roasted, but it is nevertheless shut up in a saucepan. You hear in France of a 'gigot' being 'rôti devant le feu,' and 'rôti à la casserole,' and both are very good; they will tell you that ours is the country for splendid roasts when you slaughter your holocaust, but for a little bit, my dear friend, economy forbid!

However good a cut out of twelve or twenty pounds of beef may be, you must admit that Sunday's roast, Monday's cold, Tuesday's hash, Wednesday's mince, and Thursday's broth made from the bones, is enough to send any man to dine at a club or a tavern nine days out of ten. Oh, ladies! if you hate clubs, and like to see your husbands at home, abolish cold meat, and learn to dress a cutlet decently in six different ways.

But first, hear about roasting in a casserole. You must have a very poor fire: this supposes you have nothing more than an ordinary kitchen range, at which even you manage to do it with care; but a good fire will be fatal to success. It must be clear, and producing but a very moderate heat, in fact something like the fire suggested by the following lines. It seems sacrilege to quote them, the old poem is so very beautiful; but as they come to my mind, it is evident they illustrate my thought—

'O'er the pale embers of a dying fire,
His little lampe fed with but little oil,
The curate sate, for scantie was his hire,
And ruminated sad the morrowe's toile.'

This is just the fire to 'rôtir à la casserole;' but unfortunately the poor curate had no chance of turning cook that night. You, who are more fortunate, may proceed thus, and as you will only gradually renounce large joints, begin with a leg of lamb, if you have an oval iron pot for it or a copper one, but tin is out of the question. Put in a spoonful of dripping, and when melted, place the meat sprinkled with salt, shut the lid, and leave it over the fire on the trivet; shake it up from time to time to prevent it from burning; turn it over and over, that it may be done equally. Should there not be sufficient moisture, add a little fat, but it will rarely be needed. When you consider the joint done, there will always be superfluous grease to pour off, and after placing the meat on a dish, add a little water or stock for gravy, boiling it up with a little salt, strain it over the meat, and it is ready for table. All the juice and flavour is concentrated in the meat, none can evaporate in this way, and, to my mind, we have better and more nourishing food if cooked in this way. If properly done it looks like a joint roasted before the fire; an experienced person knows the difference, but many prefer it.

The advantage in the saving of fuel is immense. In one instance you want the fiercest fire, in the other quite the contrary. For veal this method is incomparably the

best, and for all meats much to be preferred in a small family. When adopted as a regular system, cold meat is so thoroughly abolished that very often it is only by great good management that you can ever have a nice little bit cold for breakfast. Then inevitably comes the next lesson in the English lady's course, eggs! If there is no cold meat, Polidore must have something else. 'Eh bien! ma chère, nothing easier, an omelet, a fondue, œufs brouillés, au miroir, anything. I am not particular, but only hungry.'

Now you all know that we change servants in London, oh, how often! and yet how few are the ladies who meet with a servant that can make an omelet. A cook comes to be engaged. You ask what she can do. Anything, is the reply; descend from generalities and name any particular dish, you might as well talk about dating by olympiads. Can you make soup? Oh, no! she is not a professed cook, therefore soup and jelly are out of the question; and she tells you again proudly that she can roast and boil anything, and fry fish. This latter she deems the climax of what you have a right to expect for twelve or even fourteen pounds a year. Once, in despair, a lady took a respectable woman, and forebore to ask these disheartening stereotyped questions. In due time she said, 'Can you make an omelet, cook?' To which the answer was, 'Hamlet, mum? oh, yes, I dare say I can, only we have no ham!' After this, ladies, it would be as well to know what your servants are doing, or they may endeavour to send you up Hamlet instead of an omelet.

In the same house, the master being, as the French say, *legumivorous*, a new cook espied what she deemed stale vegetables; and to show her zeal cleared all away tidy, as she thought, previous to her mistress's first appearance. But taking a very early walk, the poor gentleman desiered the fowls making a meal of his spinach and sorrel, and other delicacies. He was quite a gourmand, and therefore managed his spinach after this fashion:—

my it was boiled on Monday, and sent to table properly seasoned, it went away untouched; the next day it was warmed with an additional piece of butter, and again not eaten; and so on for four or five days, each time absorbing more butter, till at last, finding it sufficiently good, he made an end of it.

In France the universal habit of economy and making the most of every little thing, added to the superior knowledge of the household servants, would have prevented this waste; but here the master was only considered mean and near to eat what the cook would certainly not have touched herself, till, after a short residence in the family, she began to get used to such different ways; but on the whole found the work lighter, and the little stove quite a comfort, particularly in summer. 'But, cook,' said the mistress, 'you like the food, don't you? You do our little bits so nicely now, I should have thought you were beginning to like French cookery.' 'Well, mum, I like some of master's things, such as them kidneys stewed with wine, and the larks with bits of bacon, and all them fancy soups which cost a'most nothing; it's very clever, there's no denying that.' 'You are certainly improved,' rejoined her mistress, 'for you never throw away anything now.' 'Why, mum,' replied the honest woman, 'it would be a sin to throw anything away now, for I know what to do with it; but if you will believe me, mum, I no more knew what to do with them green stews I saw the first morning I come, than the babe unborn.'

Again, I can tell you of another English girl in respectable service who washed a salad in warm water, and 'thought it was no odds, as other vegetables was used to hot water, and it kep 'em green.'

It is indispensably necessary that the mistresses should first learn before they can hope to teach the servants who at present torment them, unconsciously, so much; the whole fabric of society would be much improved thereby, but at present few indeed are the ladies who know anything about the

matter. The cooks, bad as they are, have the best of it. They have no theory, no science; only as Sir Joshua Reynolds said of another class of bad artists, 'Purblind practice leads the way;' and practice, with no theory to regulate it, is an unsatisfactory state for any art to remain at. The worst waste prevails, generally because no one knows what to do with the *débris* of dishes; things are ordered which the cook knows nothing about; recourse is had to a book which no one appreciates: the whole thing is spoilt. 'No one must'n' tell missis nothink about it; what's the odds? she won't know the difference.' And so the failure is dished up, sent to table, sent away again in disgust, French cooking declared unattainable, and wholesome roast mutton persisted in *ad nauseam*.

Recourse is had to a book no one appreciates. Most likely. The best books have been written by persons engaged in vast establishments, where important guests are constantly received, and banquets, almost regal, are of frequent occurrence. To serve such a house or palace, every arrangement is on a large scale, and the cooks engaged in preparing those dinners write only what they have practised. The student who follows them must for himself judge the quantities according to the extent of the dinner, observing somewhat the same proportions.

For instance, I will humbly comment on the opening directions of M. Francatelli, 'pupil of the celebrated Carême, and late chief cook to her Majesty.' He says you must begin a day or two before to prepare the grand stock—that is to say, the foundation of all your soups, entrées, &c., for your grand dinner. This will frighten no one; on the contrary, every one will see the advantage of having plenty of time. Read on: 'For a dinner of twelve entrées, two legs of white veal of about forty pounds weight, the same quantity of gravy beef, and forty pounds of leg of beef and knuckles of veal, would be required.' 'What! one hundred and twenty pounds of meat?' you exclaim. 'Monstrous!

Shut the book; send it back, and get another with the money; it will never be any use to me.' Don't be in such a hurry; read on, and you will find he takes out the noix from the veal to make two fricandeaux and other things; and when you reflect that this was the way things were managed at Buckingham Palace, most likely you will see that the provision was not too great for the magnitude of the establishment. But in the same paragraph he adds, 'Avoid the use of herbs and spices;' and this piece of advice is worth the price of the whole book. Overdoing and high seasoning are the rocks all lady amateurs would founder on.

What you should glean from the above directions is simply this, that you must extract the juice of beef and veal for your foundation stock, and, using vegetables to flavour, avoid herbs and spices in that stage of your preparations. It was the herbs and spices that turned poor Madame B— de C—'s soup so redly black, and made it taste 'comme de la médecine,' as poor Polidore often said.

If you read French, by all means buy a little French book called, 'La Cuisinière de la Campagne et de la Ville,' or some such title, price three francs or shillings. At any rate there are others, should this one be out of print. The little books give their direction in the following humble way. For example, to make croquets: 'Take remnants of cold veal, roast or boiled, or fowl or rabbit—in a word, *ce que vous avez*; chop fine, add some bechamel sauce, *si vous en avez*, if not a little cream, a drop of gravy, pepper, salt, and as much flour as will suffice to make it sufficiently consistent; but this must be attained by practice,' &c.—which all amounts to this, that if you arrive at mixing the ingredients in proper proportions, you have attained the art of making a palatable dish out of any scraps you happen to have. But you must not imagine you can do anything without practice.

This is the secret of good management and true economy. Use what you have. I could even tack a

higher moral to the pervading thought of this little French book; we must make up our dinner decently with what we have at hand, not wishing for unattainable ingredients. In like manner, we must shape our course, prudently and thankfully, through the troubles of our own particular path in life, and not halt and spoil all by repining that our lot is not like Lady Jane's, or that of the Honourable Angelina Seraphina Fitz-Gigglestein.

Many persons will say this is all very well to write about or to talk about, but ladies will not care to try the experiment I recommend with such servants as are now to be had. If they reflect, they will find the worst fault of our poor servants is ignorance; their sauciness very often only comes to the surface when reproved for not accomplishing what they cannot know. Their position taxes not only their physical strength, but the moral power of endurance, their chief faults having been ever the same. St. Paul tells Titus to 'exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; *not answering again*, not purloining.' Was not our common nature the same in the remotest time? Boileau has this—

'— des valets, souvent voleurs et traîtres
Et toujours à coup sûr ennemis de leurs
maîtres.'

Probably they are our enemies sometimes: but our duty is to do good to our enemies, and also to instruct our servants.

It is greatly to be desired that as every one laments the want of good servants, each lady would endeavour to teach her own, and, abandoning the idea of finding a good cook, make one. There is no scarcity of nice housemaids. A dirty house in England is a rare object, and no lady would endure one. On the contrary, the vigilant eye of the mistress detects unbrushed stairs and unwashed mantelpieces, and things go on very well everywhere but at table. There, indeed, a new system ought to obtain. Cooking is a branch of domestic

business in which men will rarely meddle, gentlemen never, and the mistress of the house is sure not to be interfered with. With the exception of the great luminaries of the art, all cooks are women; would we could say all women are cooks. Lady Morgan says they were born to that end; and in the great endeavour to improve the working classes, this trade of cooking ought to be made a prominent instrument for their good. Miss Martineau has justly pointed out that the poor are worse off than they need be, if they

knew how to cook such food as they can procure; and tells us of the misery of whole districts where abundance of fish can be had almost for nothing, the inhabitants of which are in abject want, because they cannot turn into palatable food what they can so easily obtain.

Here is a field for philanthropic endeavours; and, like charity, we must begin at home. Women can best promote the cause of women; and in improving the moral condition of domestic servants, we reap an immediate reward.

LIFE'S FLOWERS AND FRUITS.

(Lines written to Mr. Bouvier's Painting, entitled 'Flores y Frutos.')

I.

THE sunrise reddens the Southern sky,
And the dark-eyed Donas sing cheerily
As the matin-bell, with its silver chime,
Kings out o'er Seville at the bid of Time.

II.

Pink and amber on the market-stalls,
The melons gleam, and the burnished balls
Of the fragrant citrons, gold and green,
Nestle their polished leaves between.

III.

The purple plum and the white grape shine—
Generous fruit of the southern vine—
The yellow lemon, the orange rare,
Their perfume lend to the Southern air.

IV.

The rich red peach and the apricot,
In their baskets glisten—the sun grows hot;
Thirst grows apace as the noon-rays fall,
What recks it, friends? Here is fruit for all.

V.

The market-maid with her flowers sweet
Comes tripping it down the broad sunny street.
Senora, they tell me that Cupids lie
In the depth of a Spanish Dona's eye!

VI.

What! a cloud on thy sun, my bright coquette?
'Is he come?' 'Ah, bella, not yet, not yet.'
Oh truant lover! what, doubt *her* truth?
Well, to love and to quarrel is dear to youth!

VII.

April has ever her smiles and her showers;
We could gather no fruits had there bloomed no flowers.
When a girl looks down with a blush and a sigh,
We all know what the fruit will be by-and-by.

VIII.

'Neath a sheltering arch two maidens gay
Sport, filled with the life of the warm Spanish day;
Their ringing laughter of pure hearts tells,
As sweet and as soft as the neighbouring bells.

IX.

One smiles quaintly in half-surprise,
Looking into her pitcher with clear dark eyes.
Looking into the crystal, not half so fair
As the bright young face she sees mirror'd there.

X.

The other twines, whilst her soft cheek glows,
In her jet-black tresses, a crimson rose;
Half with a tremble, half with a frown,
For it may be 'Some one' is looking down.

XI.

Some one? Well, the old wall is wide,
And a youth may look down on *either* side.
Hearts *can* wander and eyes *can* stray,
And a 'will,' Serora, *can* 'find a way.'

XII.

Flowers of our May-time, flowers of our Truth,
Oh! the golden days of our sunny youth,
When the loves of two souls take for ever root,
Turning life's spring flowers to its autumn fruit.

ASTLEY H. BALDWIN.



S.

WIN.

ING CROSS.

XUM





From the Painting by J. Bouvier, Sen.

FLORES Y FRUTOS.

[See "Life's Flowers and Fruits,"





LONDON SOCIETY.

The Christmas Number for 1852.

THE EDITOR'S CHRISTMAS GREETING.



A word to the readers of the
Society's Christmas Number.
The Society's Christmas Number
is now published, and is
a very interesting and
valuable work. It contains
a great deal of information
about the history and
customs of the Christmas
season, and is a very
valuable work for every
family.

LONDON SOCIETY.

The Christmas Number for 1863.

THE EDITOR'S CHRISTMAS GREETING.



*A merry Christmas-time to all,
Where'er these pages wander forth
Upon this vast terrestrial ball,
In burning East, or frozen North,*

*In royal palaces—where mirth
Is sanctified by sorrow's shade—
Or in the lowly homes of earth,
Where want and poverty invade.*

*To each and all—to high and low—
Our greeting is the old one still,
The tidings, uttered long ago,
Of peace, and kindness, and goodwill.*

The Editor's Christmas Greeting.

*It is by God's own holy rule
The closing of the year belongs,
To this fair festival of Yule,
That brings forgiveness of all wrongs:—*

*For, when the log is lit, and when
Rings out the cheery Christmas chime,
He, who can hate his fellow-men,
Knows not the blessing of the time.*

*A merry Christmas, once again,
To all within our sea-girt isle,
Where, in their order, sun and rain
Bid the abundant harvests smile.*

*A merry Christmas, too, for all
Who dwell beyond the ocean foam—
Exiles, to whom these words recall
The dear old memories of Home!*

*Nor must our workers be forgot,
Who toil with pencil or with pen,
To lighten life's laborious lot,
To cheer—and teach—their fellow-men,—*

*To lend the idle moments wings,
That yet shall upward tend and tower,—
To hang about earth's common things
Garlands, where healing blossoms flower,—*

*To fill the time, that might be past
In seeking some ignoble aim,
With impulses and longings vast,
With knowledge of the Age's claim,—*

*To wake the tear—that purest pearl
Which gleams on gentle Pity's brow,—
To show the drooping bow unfurl
Hereafter's rays through glooms of Now,—*

*To tune the laughter, that might ring
In Eden's pure, unsullied bowers,—
To teach the human heart to sing
Through Trouble's darkest, longest hours:*

*This is their task—the chosen band
Of workers trusty, tried, and true,
Who spread delight in every land
Our pages reach—the whole world through.*

*Fair fingers ply for us the pen,
Or bid the ready pencil glide;
For us toil earnest, thoughtful men,
Who cheer and gladden while they guide.*

*We gather gems of passing worth
From artist, author, bard, and sage;—
E'en lofty dames of gentle birth
Lend courtly graces to our page.*

*A merry Christmas to them all,
Our comrades in the gallant fight
'Gainst care and sorrow, hate and gall,
For mirth, and kindness, and delight!*

*Our Christmas feast once more is spread,—
Songs, stories, pictures—prose and rhyme—
Mirth for the season, with a thread
Of noble teaching for the time.*

*For on the birthday of Our Lord
We hold it is the writer's part
To strive to touch that common chord,
In unison with every heart;*

*That so, whate'er the fancies be,
That throng our Christmas pages,—still
Some thought of love and charity
Shall make the reader's bosom thrill,*

*And he shall shut the book a while,
With kindly heart, and chastened mind,
Recall the season with a smile,
And say 'God bless all Humankind!'*

*A merry Christmas then to all—
We echo the good wish once more,
For sure the greeting will not pall
Though we repeat it o'er and o'er—*

*To each and all, to high and low,
That greeting is the old one still,
The tidings, uttered long ago,
Of peace, and kindness, and goodwill.*



A CHRISTMAS DAY IN A JEW'S HOUSE.

WE always 'keep Christmas' in our village, although it is the fashion somewhat, now-a-days, to sneer at the custom and profess to discover no reason for rejoicing at that particular season. Our neighbours are no better than other folk, but there are many acts of kindness performed by rich and poor, and some small feuds forgiven because of the usages of the time and the remembrance of the great event which they celebrate. No dwelling however humble but has its sprig of green holly in its windows, and when the inmates comprise both young and old, a bough of mistletoe is seldom absent. All this, perhaps, would be out of place in London Society, but we should miss these indications of Christmas-time, sadly.

Our rector is a stickler for all pertaining to Christmas observances, in and out of church; and he makes it a rule to invite certain of his friends and neighbours to make merry with him on Christmas Eve, not seeing anything sinful or uncanonical in 'a liberal hospitality' which embraces egg-hot and elder wine, and a round game of speculation. Sometimes, of later years, speculation has been voted too noisy, and one or other has ventured to tell a story, dull enough often, but we are good-natured critics generally, and especially on Christmas Eve, when under the genial influence of the rector's brewage.

Our doctor (he bought the practice some six years ago) has a reputation amongst us as a story-teller, and we now propose to narrate all that we can remember of an account he gave us last Christmas, after supper, of the way in which he came to have a Christmas dinner in a Jew's house.

It was to this effect.

'After passing my examination at St. Bartholomew's, I was assistant for some years to a gentleman, part of whose practice lay about the neighbourhood of Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and as the patients in those localities were not very aristocratic, they usually (except in cases of danger or difficulty) de-

volved upon me. It was in my professional capacity that I became acquainted with the story I am about to tell.

'There are many faded streets in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden—streets which, in time past, had inhabitants whose names will be ever associated with the arts and literature of our country; but their places are now occupied by less distinguished persons, although many of them are engaged in pursuits similar to those which developed the genius of their great predecessors. On the second floor, in one of those houses, lived Mr. Maul, an artist, who managed to earn a limited income by portrait painting. His powers of execution were by no means commensurate with his ambition, but they satisfied the class of sitters whose homely faces he transferred to his canvases. He was, in fact, the artist to a portrait club, established at one of the adjoining taverns, and his patrons were content to accept distinctness of expression and gorgeousness of attire for finish of manipulation; and Mr. Maul was always prodigal in those particulars, never allowing a portrait to leave his easel until he had adorned the subject of it with a waistcoat of chrome yellow and a coat of Prussian blue, profusely ornamented with buttons almost equal in appearance to original brass. Watch chains and bunches of ponderous seals were prodigally bestowed; and when finger-rings came in fashion with the vulgar, he never painted a hand without a carbuncle worth ten times the money paid for the introduced digits, and hands were always charged extra. Mr. Maul's remuneration was not excessive; but his engagements were regular, and he contrived to maintain a respectable appearance and to pay his way like an honest man that he was. Mr. Maul might, it must be confessed, have been a little more provident; but singing a good song, and having other social qualifications, he was induced, rather too frequently, to stay late at his tavern

and to spend more money than he ought to have done considering the precariousness of his employment, more especially as his pretty daughter Grace had no one in the wide world to care for her but himself, as her mother had died many years ago, when Grace was only a very little child, so young and plump, that her mother called her "Dumpling," and this name, for the sake of her, perhaps, who had bestowed it upon the child, had been retained, although modified somewhat into "Dumps" and "Dumple."

'It was not in the least applicable to Grace Maul when she was "sweet sixteen," as she had grown to be a most graceful maiden, her form quite perfect, and her face pretty enough for her beautiful blue eyes and rich auburn hair. Her disposition was worthy to be lodged in such a casket, as she was always kind and gentle, and loved her father so dearly, that she thought the good people who appeared in blue and yellow on his easel were quite equal to any of the much be-praised portraits which she saw on the walls of the Royal Academy when she paid her annual visit to that painter's paradise (or inferno); and nothing could be stronger proof of a blind love than such an opinion, for Mr. Maul was rather hard in his outline and usually flat in his colour. He was great, however, at expression, as the portrait of the landlord hanging up in the bar-parlour of "The Early Potato" in Covent Garden Market testified to all comers.

'Dumple was very clever with her needle, and Mr. Maul's shirt-fronts were the envy of his acquaintances. She was a capital housekeeper, and made the weekly earnings sufficient for all their wants and a few luxuries besides, as their sitting-room—it was Mr. Maul's studio also—was ornamented with such flowers as would grow in a London second-floor when carefully tended; and Grace was such a watchful attendant that her plants lived out their natural lives, and made, at proper seasons, the otherwise dull room look like a country bower. Nothing could be neater or more becoming

than Dumple's dresses, or prettier than her bonnets, and yet she was her own dressmaker and milliner, and had acquired the "art and mystery" of those important callings without the aid of an instructor. She made herself useful also to the great artist by "setting his palette" for him in the morning and cleaning it in the evening when he had done work, being very careful of the colours. At times, when other sitters than those connected with "the club" presented themselves, and artist-work increased, Dumple would "scumble in" the blues and the yellows, leaving the master-hand to insert the lights and shadows, the buttons and jewellery, with an effect no other hand could produce—so Dumple thought, dear child. As soon as daylight failed in the winter, and long before in the summer-time, Mr. Maul found his dinner ready for him; and though it rarely consisted of more than two courses, it was prepared so cleverly, and served so neatly, that it might have "put an appetite beneath the ribs of death," even as it did beneath those of the great artist who had won a right to it by his genius and his labour. Now and then, owing to the theatrical tendency of the locality, Mr. Maul was presented with "an order for two" to the play, where Dumple enjoyed herself to the utmost, and for days after, as it served her as the subject for conversation with her father, who knew many of the lesser histrionic luminaries off the stage, and also for her morning's reading, as she selected the play she had witnessed, and it was her custom to read aloud to her father whilst he sat at his work; and by so doing she had gained more knowledge than usually falls to the share of a poor girl who could not be spared to go to school at an age when she would have profited most by her studies. Dumple and her father were very happy together; and though Mr. Maul had his professional jealousies and sense of genius unappreciated, he pursued the even tenour of his way pretty quietly.

'But there came a need for the doctor. The painter's hand would not

work so obediently as it had been wont to do, and a numbness seized it every now and then which alarmed both father and daughter. It was incipient paralysis, no doubt, and the remedy was rest.

'Rest! Leave work!

'Why that meant more than the bodily discomfort. To rest from work implied an empty cupboard or the beginning of debt, which might go on increasing and increasing until it became too heavy to bear, and could only be laid down within the walls of a prison. Rest! Impossible!

'The unsteady hand worked on, more slowly every day, until at last the brush dropped from the powerless fingers, and the toiler's work was ended. Poor Dumble had watched daily the insidious approach of the terrible enemy, and, like a brave girl, had cast about to meet the consequences. Her skill in embroidery was now so employed as to help the wearied breadwinner, and she worked early in the morning and late into the night; but her gains were very small compared to the lessening earnings of her father. When those ceased altogether, her position seemed almost desperate; but Dumble had a brave heart beneath her graceful bosom, and she would not despair. Not she, though only eighteen.

'It wanted three weeks to Christmas, and Dumble had noticed lately, when on her way to the City, where she sold her embroidery, a number of young girls passing in and out of the stage-door of Drury Lane Theatre. She wondered what their business could be, and whether they were earning money. One day, after she had thought thus, she stood on the opposite side of the street earnestly gazing at a group of young girls who had just left the theatre, and who remained chatting together until they separated with laughter and smiling faces, going their different ways. As she continued looking after them, a Jew of some fifty years of age stopped suddenly near her and seemed to have found an interest in her pretty wondering face. He was not a very presentable person, being unshaven, and his

face, hands, and wardrobe would have been improved by a thorough ablution. He, too, had come out of the theatre; but, Dumble had scarcely noticed him, her thoughts having been with the happy laughing girls.

'What are you looking at the stage-door for, my dear?" said the Jew to Dumble; "is you waiting for anybody to come out? Everybody's gone, almost."

"No, sir," replied Dumble, not feeling in the least afraid; "I don't know any one connected with the theatre;" adding, after a pause, "I wish I did, sir."

"Why, my dear?" asked the Jew; "is you in the profession?"

"The profession?" inquired Dumble, with a great stare.

"Yes—they calls it 'the profession' do the actors," replied the Jew. "Is you wanting an engagement in any line?"

"I should be very glad to——" Dumble paused, for her brave heart beat quickly at its own boldness.

"Yes, I should be very glad to get an engagement if I knew how."

"What as, my dear? Chorus? Bally? or only to go on?" asked the Jew.

"I presume only to go on," answered Dumble; "I have not been educated as a musician, nor can I dance, I'm afraid."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! that's not a very good look-out for you: only fifteen bob a week, and find your own shoes and stockings," said the Jew.

"Fifteen shillings a week?" asked Dumble, with great interest; "as much as that?"

"Yes, at Christmas-time," said the Jew.

"And could you—could you tell me how to apply for such an engagement?" asked Dumble, boldly at last.

"Well, I don't think the number is made up, as I haven't measured half they says there's to be," replied the Jew; "and Mrs. Bellair, the bally-missus, won't let 'em wear no shoes but mine. There she is, a coming 'out of the the-a-tre, and if you'll wait here, I'll ask her the question."

'The dirty little Jew ran across the road in a strange shambling manner, and having had a few words with the lady to whom he had referred, suddenly presented himself in the muddy gutter and beckoned Dimple to come over to him. As she obeyed his summons, picking her way carefully from stone to stone, the shoemaker's professional eye glistened as he noticed the pretty feet—

'Which like two little mice peeped out
From underneath her petticoat.'

The ballet-mistress stared into Dimple's face, and then rapidly surveyed her figure.

"Yes, Myers, she has a good face and figure, and as we want most of our small ladies for Cupids and the tall ones for pages, I think I can engage her to go on. What's your name, my dear?" asked Mrs. Bellair.

"Maul, ma'am," replied Dimple.

"Maul, no; your Christian name, my dear."

"Dum——" she had nearly said Dimple, but replied "Grace, ma'am."

"Grace!" cried Mrs. Bellair; "Oh, that will never do. What names have we got to spare, I wonder?" pulling out a very soiled roll of paper. "O-ah! yes—here's 'Mathilde' vacant. You call yourself Mathilde, dear, and come to rehearsal to-morrow at ten. Of course, she knows she won't be paid for rehearsals, and that I expect a fee of one shilling a week for teaching her her business to the end of her engagement."

'Poor Dimple understood little of what she now heard, as she was quite overcome with her good fortune, although she knew she had to wait three long, long weeks before she inherited.

'Mr. Myers undertook to explain matters to his *protégée*, and proceeded to do so in the manner following.

"There, my dear, you're engaged for the run of the pantomime at half a crown a night, but you'll find your own shoes, and fleshings, and ornaments for you 'air if you wants any, except wreaths, and them you'll get in the wardrobe. You'll come to rehearsal to-morrow at ten, and

mustn't mind being put at the back 'mongst the ugly ladies and awkward ones. You'll soon make your way to the front if I isn't mistaken. Your shoes will be three-and-six-pence a pair unless you chooses to have satin, which'll be five-and-six-pence with sandals. I shall be at the the-à-tre to-morrow at twelve, and will measure you, for ready money, dear, as I works cheap, and am too poor to give credit."

'Dimple thanked her new-found friend, and then hastened home, fearing, however, to tell her father the new life which was before her. The poor painter was seated as she had left him, in his chair by the window, gazing every now and then at his empty easel, until he closed his eyes as though to shut away the present and the future. He would then look out vacantly into the street, regarding neither sight nor sound, as though all human sympathy had left him. Not so when Dimple spoke, as she entered the room. Her cheery voice went at once to the father's heart, and a smile played about the sad distorted features of the poor painter like a sun-beam upon a grave.

'She kissed him tenderly, and having taken off her bonnet and little cloak, showed him triumphantly the money she had received for her last three days' work at embroidery, clapping her hands as though the jangling of those two half-crowns was music to last for ever. The bright look had left her face when she had opened a drawer and added her hard earnings to the small sum which had been saved before the painter's hand was paralyzed, and which every week had made less. Now that she knew her parent's restoration was hopeless, she had determined to quit their present lodgings and seek some that were cheaper; but she delayed communicating the necessity for this step to her father, fearing that it would convey to the old man a conviction of his own helplessness and a dread of the uncertain future, and so she remained silent. The poor artist had nothing more to learn—nothing more to fear, as he had long known his fate, sitting there through the

long day with his palette within his reach—the tired old bread-winner—and without the power to stretch forth his hand and labour.

‘The next day Dumble was punctual to the hour of rehearsal, and found herself much more at home among her stranger comrades than she had expected, although she had been rather dismayed when she first entered the dark, dismal theatre, so unlike the bright place she had seen it on those happy evenings when she had sat in the front with her father, and which had haunted her for days after. There was little time for such remembrances, as the practice preliminary to the rehearsal began. Her grace and quickness soon attracted the attention of Mrs. Bellair; and before the week was ended Dumble had been promoted to dance—yes, to dance in the second row with the prospective salary of eighteen shillings a week. When she told the dirty little Jew of her advancement, he seemed as delighted as though some great advantage had accrued to himself.

“Well, Miss Matildy,” he said, “I’m as pleased as Punch to hear on your good fortin’. Second row and eighteen shillin’ a week. You’ll have satin shoes—next pair, miss, and I shall take off the hodd sixpence.”

“Thank you, Mr. Myers,” replied Dumble, “but I am compelled to be very saving, indeed. You have been so kind to me, that I don’t mind saying so to you. I have a poor, dear, helpless father to support, and——” she paused, smiling sadly.

“Don’t say another word, miss; I shall make ‘em you for four shillin’ and lose money,” whispered Mr. Myers.

“Oh, I was not thinking of the shoes but of something else, and in which you can, perhaps, help me. My father was an artist, but illness has now incapacitated him for his work, and as we have no friends, I must take care of him, Mr. Myers.”

Dumble smiled again, but very pleasantly.

“Yes, miss,” said Myers, clutching his fingers as though he longed to embrace her; “I knowed you was a good girl, I was sure on it.”

“I am only doing my duty, Mr. Myers,” continued Dumble. “We have hitherto lived in lodgings in—— Street, but our means are gone, and I want to find some cheaper rooms near the theatre.”

‘Mr. Myers took a small piece of chalk from his pocket and began figuring on the back of the scenes. He was not satisfied at first with a calculation he had made, and it required some further time to make it right. When he had effected it he exclaimed, “Yes, that’ll do.” Dumble saw that the various items and the figures attached which he had chalked upon the scene, amounted exactly to eighteen shillings.

“I can’t see, miss,” said Mr. Myers, “that arter you have paid other expenses you can anyhow afford more nor three shillings a week for your lodgings, and rents is high about Doory Lane and Common Garden, leave alone taxes.”

“I suppose they must be,” said Dumble, with a sigh.

“Now I’ve this to say, Miss Matildy,” continued Mr. Myers, “we’ve—that’s me and my sister Naomi—we’ve a second floor back and front, which we lets out to single men, but if them rooms ’ll suit you we’ll say three shillin’ a week for the two and nothin’ for the water-rate.”

‘Dumble hesitated to accept this liberal proposal with the readiness with which it had been made, for should Mr. Myers’s house, she thought, want washing, painting, and repairing as much as himself, it could not be a very desirable tenement. She therefore promised to think over the matter and call upon him the next day.

‘Having kept her word, Dumble was agreeably surprised to find that Mr. Myers resided in a broad court (I forget its name), and that his house, though dingy enough without from age and weather, was cleanly within, as Naomi, the dirty little Jew’s sister, was a most tidy contrast to her hardworking brother.

‘The rooms were light and airy considering the locality, and Dumble gladly closed with the Jew’s proposal that she and her father should occupy them henceforth at the weekly charge of three shillings. As she returned

to her old lodgings she turned over in her mind how she should break the matter of removal to her father, and inform him also of the important step she had taken; and so difficult did the task appear that she had to pause at the door before she could come to a decision.

"There was the old odd smile to welcome her when she entered the room, as though her presence had brought "sunshine to a shady place," and she acknowledged her welcome by a tender embrace.

"You have thought me a sad truant to-day, haven't you?" she said.

"Mr. Maul nodded in reply.

"Wait until I have put away my things, and then I will tell you what I have been doing," she continued, evidently delaying the communication she had to make as long as possible. Having put off her walking attire, she placed a stool at her father's feet and sat down. Taking his cold powerless hand in her own, she pressed it to her lips, and then looked up into his distorted face, her own beaming with all the love she had in her heart for the poor sufferer.

"I am going to tell you a secret, father," she said, "one which I have kept from you for some days, and only because I thought, if I failed in the experiment I was making, I would not distress you with the knowledge of my failure. I have succeeded, however, and so much better than I had hoped for that I have come at once to make confession."

"Mr. Maul again nodded his head, but his smile had gone and his eyes expressed only wonder.

"You have known—I am sure you have—that my earnings have been less than enough to supply our wants. Don't look so sad! I am going to tell you how I intend to make them enough, quite enough, dear father."

"Again she kissed the cold, powerless hand as though to thank it for all the work it had done in years past, now that she, "little Dump," or "old Dumble," was about to become the worker.

"Your savings, father, have

dwindled and dwindled under my care until I blush to say there is hardly more than enough to pay our rent here and help us to remove to a new lodging."

"Wonder again and sorrow in the old man's face.

"But did I not tell you I can provide for our future! Do not, therefore, look so very sad at leaving this old room, which now has more painful than pleasant memories connected with it. Our new lodging is quite as cheerful, and shall be quite as happy as this has been" (she did not believe herself or she would not have sighed so silently and deeply).

"The rent will be quite within our means. Ah! you may look surprised, but I shall have employment next week—constant employment—which will bring in—oh! I hardly know what at present, when added to my embroidery."

"Mr. Maul muttered feebly, "What employment, Dum-ple, dear?"

"Duchesses, ladies, good women have worked at it, dear father; kings and queens and all sorts of good people have praised and rewarded it, and therefore old Dumble need not hesitate to take part in it. Do you guess what it is?"

"Mr. Maul replied in his usual manner, and shook his head.

"I thought you would not. I am engaged as a young lady to go on the stage at Drury Lane."

"This announcement was startling indeed to Mr. Maul, and his whole frame was affected, whilst a flush overspread his usually pallid features.

"You do not, must not disapprove what I have done, dear father," said Dumble, observing these changes. "It is the only employment I can find at present, and it is honourable to those who choose to make it so. You can trust 'old Dumble,' can you not? I have, therefore, taken lodgings not two minutes' walk — not one minute's run—from the theatre, so that I shall need no—so that I shall be there and home again in no time scarcely. I have arranged to leave here on Saturday next; so we shall have plenty to do to pack up and get settled in our new home."

'The tears ran down the cheeks of father and daughter, but not from sorrow, as they were smiling also. Dumble set to work at once to prepare for their exodus, and when I called to visit my patient the next day I found her struggling so nobly with a four-post bedstead that I could not refrain taking off my coat and helping her to overcome the troublesome monster. Did you ever try to dissect a four-poster? Don't if you are wise. Castors, wrenches, and screws; legs travelling all over the room, and will not be dis-jointed; head-boards and laths tumbling about and finding rest nowhere and everywhere. Don't dissect a four-poster unless you have the patience and good temper of Dumble Maul. (The doctor's wife, whose name, by-the-by, is Grace, called him 'a silly fellow' for this commendation of her namesake.)

'The last chair but one, and all the rest of the worldly possessions of the Mauls were safely stowed on the hired van, and the little dirty Jew and Dumble waited to assist the now nearly helpless artist to descend, for the last time, the stairs he had trodden so often. They gently raised him up, and when the van-man had carried away his chair, Mr. Maul looked around the room for a few moments and burst into a passion of tears. Dumble could not restrain hers either, and from a clean streak observed on both cheeks of the dirty little Jew, when the party reached the street, it was conjectured that he also had yielded to lachrymal sympathy.

No one who had seen the rooms in the Jew's house during their former occupancy could have believed in the "transformation scene" they presented when Dumble and her father had been settled there a few days. There were green plants, though it was Christmas time, and neat curtains, well-ordered furniture, and a small bright fire in the grate. An old easel stood near one window, and at the other, in his easy-chair, sat the old artist, who had worked before it many and many a pleasant hour, looking out upon the world of the broad court and feeling that he had no longer a part in its struggles.

Not directly, certainly, as Dumble had taken up all his burthens except his sufferings, which he bore meekly and patiently himself, and never obtruded them upon his brave, loving daughter, after one brief conversation with her, and with me when I had described—compelled thereto by an earnest appeal from him—the probable termination of his case. He had spoken to her with great difficulty, and his manner had made his words more painful to her.

"Grace, dear," he said, "the doctor has told me that my life is near its close. Since I have sat so much alone—powerless for work—thinking of the past and of the future, I blame myself greatly for many improvident acts. Well, if to say so gives you pain I will not dwell upon the irretrievable past, dear child, but believe that I have done my duty in part since you love me so dearly."

'Grace knew that he could not doubt that she did love him, and therefore she was silent, only kissing him.

'He then spoke many solemn words of hope and thankfulness, which Grace always remembered when she felt doubtful or sorrowful and a lonely woman.

"There is one weakness I cannot overcome, Grace," he continued, "knowing how little it matters what becomes of this poor body when the spirit has left it, but—but where I laid your mother fifteen years ago I would——"

'Grace understood his wish, and promised that it should be accomplished, trusting in her heart that aid would be given her when it was needed, and saving week by week and little by little for an object which was henceforth regarded as a sacred duty.

'It was near Easter time, and tribulation came to the house of Naomi and Abraham Myers in the shape of a bad debt. The treasury of the Theatre Royal Squashborough had collapsed, and the manager was indebted to Mr. Myers no less a sum than nine pounds and some shillings. Mr. Myers had calculated upon this money to buy stock for his Easter orders, and having scant credit him-

self he saw only ruin in the loss of his money and the impossibility of carrying on his business. The few valuables he possessed when sold or pawned did not meet the difficulty, and he was on the point of abandoning the construction of several pairs of "pink fairies" and "blue pages" when a real FAIRY came into his dark dirty workshop (the only dirty place about the house) in the graceful form of Dimple Maul.

"Two pounds! Only two pounds would enable him to go to work and maintain his proud position of fancy bootmaker to the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

"He could hardly believe his eyes when he saw Miss Matildy bring forth from a small purse two glittering pieces of gold and place them on his lapstone, saying—

"Mr. Myers, you have been so kind to me in many ways, helping me so often, that you must let me help you a little in return. That money I have saved by sixpences and shillings for a very solemn, sacred purpose, and I am sure you will repay me when you can."

"I can! I will, Miss Matildy," said the dirty little Jew, his tears almost washing his face quite clean. "I think I know what the money is for, and I would die—starve myself to pay it back to you."

"So the fairy held out her pretty white hand, and the gnome took it between his own dirty paws and pressed it to the leather apron which covered his heaving bosom.

"Oh, how exacting was old Myers that Easter time! No credit to pago or fairy on any account (except to one young girl whose mother was sick), and he had been heard to threaten 'an advance of sixpence a pair if he were only asked to take a moiety on account. Poor little fellow! he scarcely rested until he had repaid those two pounds into the sacred treasury, and with interest—a gratitude never to be exhausted.

"The money was not needed until the last month of the year, and then the poor artist took a farewell gaze at his old casel and his young daughter's face and closed his eyes in death. Before he was borne away to rest by the side of his wife the

Sacred Treasury was emptied—quite emptied—of its contents, as the undertaker was "a man who had had losses," and cared not to have more.

"Drop the curtain and shut in the graveyard, and raise it again to the merry Pantomime!

"Why had Mrs. Bellair called "Matthilde" into her own room and been so long in conference with her? Well if ever! not twelve months in the profession and going to be Columbine!

"Such was the fact. The grace and intelligence displayed by pretty Dimple had obtained for her this distinction and profitable engagement, as it was usual at that time to pay the principal pantomimists a guinea a night in consequence of the great exertion required from them. Six guineas a week during the run of the Pantomime!

"May it run for ever and ever, Miss Matildy," cried Mr. Myers. "May you get as rich as you deserve to be, and then you needn't envy the Bank of England, my dear! Only to think! Columbine your first season, as one may say! Who would have thought it the day—" The dirty little Jew paused suddenly, and so Dimple finished his speech.

"When you saw a young girl with a sad face looking for help from some one, and your kind heart understood her want and came to offer her the aid she needed; who would have thought that she would have come to this good fortune and have had her first kind friend still beside her to be made as happy as she is herself by the news?"

"The fairy hand was again in the paws of the gnome, who, having wiped his lips on his leathern apron kissed the pretty white fingers more than once.

"Naomi Myers had become quite a friend to Dimple Maul, and knew all her little anxieties and pleasant thoughts, and the condition of the empty purse also.

"What's that matter," said Mr. Myers, who, wonderful to relate, had arrived at a state of semi-cleanliness, having been asked to tea twice in one week in Miss Matildy's room, where Naomi had been at work (gratis) for Dimple—"what's that

matter! Miss Matildy shan't stand for nothing! She shall look the beautifullest Columbine that's ever been seen, and I knows where there's some loveliest wreaths that's to be had cheap for ready money."

"Ah, ready money! ready money!"

"That's to be had too, Miss Matildy. Ain't it, Naomi? Think how you trusted me once on a time. You'll want two pair o' fleshings, and such shoes you shall have! Fifteen shillings a pair I charge to the Hopera! Satin thick as a board, and fitting your pretty foot, miss, like a kid glove. Don't you fidget about nothing."

"Could Dumble decline all this kindness, needing it so much? No."

"The approaching Christmas Day would fall on a Saturday; and on the Wednesday preceding it, Dumble having nothing to do at the theatre, was to try on her Columbine's dress at her own lodgings, Naomi having obtained permission from the theatre to make it, she being very skilful in such matters."

"How had I known this? Why Naomi had told me so when I had called upon—Naomi—in the morning; and more, she had invited me, with Dumble's kind permission, to be present in the evening to judge of the general effect."

"Never was Columbine half so lovely! The delicate pink skirt, hooped up, displayed a gauze petticoat covered with silver spangles, and short enough to disclose two of the prettiest feet in the world, and which set off to the greatest advantage Mr. Myers's very best handiwork. Her beautiful face, glowing with excitement, was surmounted by one of those "loveliest wreaths" of which we have heard, and any one who had gazed upon the graceful being must have envied the happy harlequin.' (The doctor's wife was fairly angry at this glowing description of Dumble, the columbine, and some of us thought her very ill-natured, despite her own buxom looks. The doctor only laughed and went on.)

"Some cheerful-minded philosopher has said, "that wherever pleasure is, pain is certain not to be far

off," and so it was to be with poor Dumble. During the next day's rehearsal she trod upon a loose trap on the stage and sprained one of her ankles, to the consternation of the manager and the distress of all in the broad court. I had the responsibility of attending that ankle, and, knowing how many bright hopes would fail to be realized, guessing, also, how much after-care would come if Dumble should be incapacitated from exertion, I would have given all I then possessed to have been spared the case."

"Dumble bore her misfortune, as she had borne her other troubles, most bravely, her greatest uneasiness being caused by the inconvenience she feared she was causing Mr. Myers, who had provided "the ready money."

"Don't mention it, my dear Miss Matildy, don't think of me, but—it won't matter a great deal—I don't think anybody will press me for the little I owe, and I shall only work the harder—but I won't believe you won't appear. Mr. Doctor won't let you not get well, will you, sir?"

"I could not promise confidently that Dumble would be able to assume her new character, but, secretly, I had hope that she would do so; and I neglected shamefully two chronic patients, who were annuities to my employer, to attend to that pretty injured ankle. To make matters rather worse, the undertaker had heard of the accident, and, fearing for the small balance due to him for Mr. Maul's funeral, wrote to poor Dumble and demanded an order on the treasury for the small sum coming to her for salary. Mr. Myers, most unselfishly and indignantly, insisted upon Dumble's compliance with this request, and when Christmas Day broke it found the poor dancer lame and penniless."

I did not suspect all this at the time, for I was young and thoughtless, and Mr. Myers and Naomi had invited me to take my Christmas dinner in Dumble's room, as they had concluded that the great holiday which Christians make of Christmas Day ought not to be passed in loneliness and sorrow by the good lodger whom they both loved so much."

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'Just before the hour appointed for dinner, Mr. Myers, as clean as he could make himself, entered the room, followed by Naomi, each bearing a small basket.

"Here we are, Miss Matildy," exclaimed Mr. Myers, opening his basket; "here's two pound of roast beef from the best cookshop any-ways near Common Garden, and here's a lump of plum-pudden, all over reasons, and would do Mr. Rothschild good to look at it; and here's brownly potatoes and greens, and mustard—raie Durham mustard cos I tasted it—and here's Mr. Doctor as invited. You not have a Christmas dinner on Christmas Day! I never heard of such a thing, and we'll eat it together, and so God bless us all with charity!"

'Yes, Abraham Myers, dirty as you generally were, there was a bright soul burning within you, and there were good angels about your

house 'on the day I ate my Christmas dinner within it.

'Rest and great professional skill (hem!) overcame the trifling sprain (for trifling it proved to be) which had caused so much anxiety and brief sorrow, and on Boxing Night our Columbine's success was nothing short of "triumphant" (see the public papers).

'Since that day, however, she has never partaken of a Christmas dinner but at my table, as some of you may have heard before, and which I now declare with thankfulness, for such a good wife as Dimple Maul has been.'

Of course! The name of the Doctor's wife was Grace, and he had bought the practice when his predecessor retired and came to live among us, bringing with him a pretty pleasant wife and four blooming children. How stupid not to have guessed this at once!

MARK LEMON.



CHRISTMAS CHARACTERS.



CHARLES DICKENS, who has done much to keep alive respect for Christmas customs in the breast of the English people, has made us acquainted with a curmudgeon who sneered at Christmas, and mocked at its innocent observances; but he was an old man, alone in the world, with bitterness in his heart, and the gall of disappointment at his cankered soul—a waif of humanity, who had been tossed upon the sea of life, and fretted by its angry waves. Perhaps he had his excuse, so let us pity and forgive him. But what shall we say of those who, in the spring time of youth and hope, make gay sport of venerable associations, and vote Christmas a bore? In the pride of knowledge which has come upon us, the rising generation is strongly disposed to this sort of cynicism. It was but the other day that I heard a young scribe (and pharisee) exclaim: “Christmas has been overdone—“merry Christmas,” “jolly Christmas,” “festive season,” and all that sort of thing, is stale now-a-days. I shall go in and write Christmas

down.’ He who said this was young—very young—about three-and-twenty, I should say. He will think differently by-and-by. The ardent youth of his age sees all the journey of life before him, and is eager to press on; but in a little time he will come to a mile-stone on the road, where he will rest and look back wistfully over the track which he may never tread again. He will then count his years, and think how few remain to him. He will say, ‘Christmas comes but once a year, and the span of man’s life is threescore and ten.’ Seventy happy days under the mistletoe at the most! How he will cling to his Christmas days then, and grapple with them to make them stay! Alas! that nothing but experience can teach this lesson—that we must lose half our joys before we learn to prize them!

If any thoughtless youth should feel inclined to laugh at my grave looks and serious words, I will sing to him the song composed by Michael Angelo Titmarsh for Wamba the Jester:—

No! pretty page with dimpled chin,
That never has known the barber's shear,
All your aim is woman to win,
This is the way that boys begin;
Wait till you come to forty year.'

I, who write this, have not yet come to forty year, yet will I not open my window and shout to those waits to be gone for noisy vaga-



bonds, who disturb my rest and make night hideous; nor yet will I let my imagination rest upon what is probably the fact, that the three minstrels have spent the whole wage of pious hymn-singing in wassail. Do I shut my heart to the lesson of the preacher, because I may suspect that he takes more port wine than is good for him? No; I will lie and listen to the waits, and let my thoughts wander to the plains where the burden of that song first broke upon human ears, to find an echo of gladness through all generations.

Christmas comes but once a year, so I will even be indulgent to that roysterer who is going home from his goose club with his Christmas prize. The way in which he is carrying his goose tells me that he is not in a condition to receive a lecture, else I might prove to him that he has paid for that bird three times as much as it is worth. Every time he has gone to the public-house to pay his instalment of sixpence to the goose club he has spent another sixpence in drink—to-night a good deal more, evidently. In this respect, I must hand Jones over to

the teaching of Mr. George Cruikshank and the statistics of the Post-office savings bank. On my own particular grounds, I rejoice to see him making provision for a comfortable Christmas dinner. When I view him sober in his shirt-sleeves, carrying that goose home from the baker's on Christmas Day, I shall be



in a position to admire him at all points.

Christmas characters crowd upon us fast. Here is Paterfamilias, with large heart and capacious pockets, bringing love and toys for the chil-



dren. His delight, as he drags forth the 'presents' one by one, is as great as, ay greater, than theirs. Paterfamilias has come to forty year, and knows how precious are all brief

periods of innocent festival and happy domestic reunion. Who has such a rich source of pleasure on Christmas Day as papa, with all his boys and girls around him? He has his own happiness and theirs also, and the future is all bright with hopes to crown Christmas days to come. Ten years ago I was privileged to take my Christmas dinner with a nonagenarian. His grown-up sons and daughters were all about him: they were the men and women, he was the child; and they set him up in his chair, and helped him to everything he wanted, and patted him lovingly, as he had helped and patted them when they were children. He had his reward on that his last Christmas Day; for loving hands guided him, and loving lips kissed him, as he bade us all good-night, thanking God that he had been as happy that day as he had ever been any day of his long life.

I am coming to a most important Christmas character, who, I fear, is not considered so much as she ought to be—I mean the cook, who boils

give the cook half a crown, to enable her to enjoy her dinner on New Year's Day with her family, when she gets a well-earned holiday. I don't know how a cook can be happy on Christmas Day, except in the consciousness that she has done the turkey to a turn, and has not allowed the plum-pudding to stick to the bottom of the pot; and perhaps it is better to go to bed with a clear conscience than with an indigestion.

'Clean your doorstep, sir!' Nothing but Christmas custom could warrant such an impertinent proposal, seeing that snow has gone out of fashion, with many other jolly accompaniments of the season, and my doorstep no more wants cleaning than my patent-leather boots want polishing.

'Go away, you young scamp. No, stop—the railway porter, and the postman, and the newsboy will be here presently, dancing expectantly on my step for their several Christmas boxes, and then you may come and sweep off their marks.'



the turkey, and roasts the beef, and makes the plum-pudding. I suspect that, what with the steam of pots and kettles and the tasting of sauces, she has not much relish for her dinner when it comes down from the regions above with an unappetizing chill upon it. The cook is a martyr at the stake, or rather I should say the spit. I would therefore advise all Christmas guests to

Hamper, containing goose, hare, jar of mincemeat, half a dozen bottles of elder wine, &c., from Uncle Fozzle. Don't cost me a farthing; so I must open my heart and give the porter a shilling. Porter trips off the step very much 'up' in his spirits, and hies him home to Terminus Cottages, diffusing an odour of corduroy in the bracing Christmas air, to dine off tops of the ribs and

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FOUR PUBLIC CHARACTERS IN PRIVATE LIFE.



THE CLOWN.



THE PANTALON.



THE HARLEQUIN.



THE COLUMBINE.

"LOOK UP" THE COSTUME AND PREPARE FOR "BOXING NIGHT."
 Drawn by William M'Connell.

[See "Christmas Characters."

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greens, washed down with four-penny. How I envy him his appetite! Give me that appetite and



that power of digesting geristle, and I will be content, for this day at least, to wear corduroy and carry hampers.

Oh yes, Mr. Postman, I have been well aware why you have been so civil of late—why you have always touched your cap when you met me, and why you have taken so much trouble about my newspapers. Well, there is half a crown for you. I love you, for you bring me invitations to dinner, and orders for the play, and cheques from the Editor of 'London Society,' and have never yet appropriated one of them. I do not know sweeter music than your rat-tat when you bring me a cheque, so you are welcome to your small percentage; and I am glad there is only one delivery to-day, that you may have the afternoon to your beef and pudding in the bosom of your family.

Tom, and Jack, and Harry, at Dr. Birch's academy, have been looking forward to Christmas as a time of holiday. Here is one who has been looking forward to Christmas, quite as anxiously, as a time of work—the Clown. For many weeks past he has been counting the days to the golden hour when he would bound upon the stage in his spotted shirt and puff breeches, and salute the

audience with 'Here we are!' See, he has bloomed into magnificence on the strength of it, and in his braided hat and lapped coat, with velvet cuffs and collar, brings back a memory of the Duke of Brunswick. Certainly the Duke never sported so great a length of watch-chain, or such large diamonds, though as to 'carats' and 'water' they may have been superior. You would think that so fine a gentleman would disdain to wear those calico puff pantaloons—'trucks' he calls them—which he is inspecting with so much interest. But no—those 'trucks' weigh heavy on his mind just now, and Mr. May, of Bow Street, will have a sad time of it until they are made all right, and exhibit sufficient bagginess behind. And here come his companions, Pantaloon, Harlequin, and Columbine. Ah! what a glorious time Christmas is to them! The crowd at the gallery door on Boxing Night will not be more impatient for the rising of the curtain than they; for with the rising of that curtain will begin a period of constant employment and regular pay, things to which these honest artistes have been strangers, may be, for many months. Christmas Day has its pleasures to these four worthies, but they are the pleasures of expectancy. There is not much time for cooking or thought of eating in the homes of Clown, Pantaloon, Harlequin, and Columbine on Christmas Day—even if there were anything to cook. They are all too much occupied in fitting on their dresses and trying their joints. They will be fed when they stand in a pyramid under the red fire; and the 'bravos' and the clapping of hands will be more satisfying to them than any roast beef, and sweeter than any plum-pudding.

To the eyes that look out from an honest and cheerful heart these Christmas Characters will always come as a vision of pleasure and delight. He to whom they come as aught else stands in need of our prayers.

A. H.

CHRISTMAS WITH SIR LANCELOT;

OR,

GEORGE TRESHAM'S THREE CHRISTMAS DAYS.

(ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE H. THOMAS.)

WE never could make out why, but so it was.—He was never demonstrative. George Tresham was rather a quiet, reserved kind of man, who smiled rarely and never laughed, but who talked on ordinary topics and discussed books, and theatres, and people with a keen shrewdness and a touch of cynicism certainly, but still openly and unreservedly. My first acquaintance with him was when we were both at Oxford, but we did not get on very closely there. Tresham was a reading man (he took a double first), and he did not like my set; said they were ribald and fast, reproached them as ne'er-do-weels, and warned me against a continuance of their society. I paid little heed to him; but he was right, as it proved. I spent all my capital, and when it came to the last, and I was compelled to strike my colours, my friend the Viscount, who was to get me a living so soon as I was ordained, and all the rest who had drunk my wine and borrowed my money and lived at my expense, deserted me *en masse*, and I was compelled to quit college without taking my degree, and to start to Australia with 500*l.* given me by my godfather to commence sheep-farming. No matter to record here the weary time of desperate dreary work, the loneliness, the anxiety, the actual danger of starvation, the long rides, the conflicts with the natives and the bushrangers, the awful homesickness coming upon one in one's solitude: suffice it to say that I struggled through ten years of it, that Providence aided me throughout, and that I returned with a fortune gained by my own labour, larger, far larger, than I had ever dreamed to have made in England. No need to tell here of my falling in love with old Sir Charles Maitland's daughter, Bella Maitland, a country toast and a flirt of flirts, who was reported to be engaged to Earl Flood-

escent, the lord-lieutenant, and who gave up all her flirtations, and trickeries, and intentions of high estate, to become my wife and share my lot. Not that it was a bad lot; Escott Towers is reckoned as good a house as there is in Sussex, and when I married, I took a snug little house in Curzon Street, which we inhabited during the London season.

It was in our first year in Curzon Street that I met Tresham again. I was at Tattersall's one sale day looking after a brougham-horse for Bella, for my old bush-farming knowledge held to me, and I would sooner have bought a horse on my own judgment than on that of any London dealer; and while going through the stalls, catalogue in hand, I came upon a tall, grave, gentlemanly man, who was examining a stiff-built, weight-carrying cob, and who raised his eyes from the horse, and looked me full in the face with an air of blank astonishment, a little relieved by pleasure.

'You are Frank Maldon?' he asked.

I answered to my name, and then, with a sudden recollection, called out, 'And you, George Tresham?'

Tresham it was. He told me that he was settled in London, in the Temple, that he had no profession, his private fortune and his college fellowship bringing him together ample income for his wants, and that he was glad to see me again. He had heard of me from mutual friends as being married and settled, and found that the early wildness, of which he had been perhaps too troublesome a monitor, had sobered down into healthy quiet and domestic happiness. I was unfeignedly glad to see him again, and I told him that he must come and see his quondam fast young friend in his quality of Benedict.

He promised, and he came. As I imagined, he and Bella struck up a

tremendous friendship, and as he and I seemed to renew all our old likings as though we had never been separated, there were but very few days which did not find George Tresham dining or calling in Curzon Street. I found that during his sojourn in London he had taken to literature, and that certain brilliant, scholarly, though always caustic articles, published in a leading Review, had brought him into communication with some of our leading literary men, by whom he was treated with a deference and distinction which his own natural high bearing and independence of spirit did not decrease; and occasionally at his chambers I would meet some of the best-known professors of literature and art.

But with all this, Tresham was anything but a happy man. There was a gloomy reserve about him always superincumbent, blown away sometimes by the bursts of jovial gaiety with which he surrounded himself; at others, dissolved in the quiet pleasantness of cheerful society such as he met at our house. But even then, when the party was most select and most homelike, I have seen him look round the merry circle gathered round the fire, and silently shudder as though some old recollection lay heavy at his heart.

And not I alone. Women always notice this kind of thing more than men, and think much more of them. Bella, who had become quite attached to Tresham, constantly spoke to me about his melancholy, and his absent fits, and his preoccupied manners, and his general shortcomings in society, all of which she had arranged in a long and doleful catalogue.

'Isn't it a pity, Frank?' she would say, 'when he's so nice and so clever, and puts everything in such a nice light. I'm sure your fine friend Mr. Cawker, whom you brought from the club on Wednesday, and whose witty sayings you're always quoting, had to "shut up," as you call it, very quickly when Mr. Tresham answered his silly witticism about women's talk. Oh, what can make him so melancholy?

I'm sure he must have had a love affair.'

'That's just the way with you women,' I replied; 'you're so utterly vain, and egotistical, and self-satisfied, that you think no man can be unhappy without your cruelty is the cause. I deny that Tresham is unhappy; he's a little dull sometimes, certainly, but that probably arises from dyspepsia or something of that sort.'

Bella declared that this solution of the question was 'horribly low' and unromantic, and that it was plain to her that Mr. Tresham had 'something on his mind.'

This colloquy, varying a little in detail, but always maintaining the same leading points, ending with the same result, had been maintained many times between my wife and myself both in Curzon Street and at Escott Towers whither we retreated after the season, and where Tresham came down among our other visitors for the shooting. A capital companion he was in a country-house, always suggestive of something to do; a good shot without being perpetually boring to be in the stubble; a good rider without those allusions to the stable so perpetually studding the talk of horsey men; a good hand at a pic-nic without the constant flow of vapidity of the agreeable rattle; and a pleasant guide over an old castle or a ruined abbey without the dreary information of the archaeological bore or the spurious enthusiasm of the amateur poet. With all the visitors at the Towers he became a special favourite, while the grooms and gamekeepers actually idolized him, such an adept was he in those acts most particularly coming home to them, and so liberal to their position.

Time passed, and, to our delight, Tresham outstayed all our other visitors. He had some literary work on hand which absorbed most of his mornings, and in the afternoon he was always ready to ride, or drive, or accommodate himself to the will and pleasure of the majority. But our number declined one by one, and when the day for the last family-fitting was named, Tresham came into my study one morning as I sat

looking through my newly-arrived letters, and announced his proximate departure.

'Not a bit of it, George,' I said, promptly; 'here you are, old fellow, and here you'll stay. It's now the beginning of November; you've plenty of work to do. You say you like your quarters, and in them you'll remain till after Christmas. We are to have a grand gathering at Christmas time, and I look to you to help in keeping up the festivity of the season.'

He shuddered as I spoke, and said, 'No, old friend, no, thanks; at that time I must be in town.'

'What!' I replied, 'to spend your Christmas in your dull chambers by yourself, without a soul to speak to or to exchange sympathies with, while we shall have a merry household? Why, George, if you do this, I shall almost look upon it as a personal affront, and I know Bella will be horribly disappointed.'

'God bless you and her too!' Tresham exclaimed, fervently; 'the kindness shown to me by both of you since your return has shed a new lustre on my life, and since I have had you to come to, I have been a different man. But you must have noticed that I have not what people call "good spirits," and that occasionally I am dull and I fear morose.'

'Dull, George, perhaps, but never morose,' I replied; 'a little dull now and then; indeed, Bella—'

'Ah! she noticed it, I know,' said Tresham, interrupting; 'I have often seen her looking wonderingly at my gloomy expression and my knit brows, and I have endeavoured then and there to shake it off, but it *will* cling to me.'

'What is it, may I ask, George?'

'To explain, would involve a long story, Frank, and not a particularly pleasant one for me. However, you're entitled to my confidence, and I've half a dozen times been upon the point of telling you, as I think perhaps I should be a little better for the sympathy which I know you'd give me. So, to begin with—it's a woman!'

'Bella thought so!' I exclaimed, 'and—'

'I knew she had guessed so much

of my mystery; but she can have little idea how blank and dreary my life is. Well, you've finished your letters, and have an hour to spare before we go out riding, so I may as well tell you my story as briefly as possible.

'It must have been almost before you left Oxford in that abrupt manner—at least, it is nearly fourteen years ago—that I went to spend Christmas with my old godfather, Sir Lancelot Bellew, who lived in a glorious old hall in the middle of Yorkshire, and kept up his estate in such style as remains with few baronets now-a-days. I arrived on Christmas Eve, just in time for dinner; and as I was dressing, the cheery old host rapped at my door, and called out in jolly tones, "Just in time, Frank, my dear boy! brought a good appetite, I hope! put on your lightest boots, and your lightest heart, for we have the great hall cleared for Sir Roger de Coverley at nine, and there'll be *such* a mistletoe bush somewhere at hand!" When I came into the drawing-room, I found the house was full of visitors, young and old, rich and poor, gentle and simple, all gathered together round Sir Lancelot at Christmas-time, to the old man's intense joy. The dinner was capital; but I noticed that throughout it the host was somewhat fidgety and expectant, and the cloth was no sooner off the table, than he called the butler, and ordered him to "send Miss Maud here at once." After a lapse of three minutes, there bounded into the room a little girl of about seven or eight years old, the loveliest I ever saw. She had bright blue trusting eyes, long fair hair, floating in curls over her rounded shoulders, and the prettiest hands and feet possible. This was Maud Bellew, Sir Lancelot's granddaughter, and the idol of the old man's heart. Her mother had run away from home with a penniless curate, and had died, unforgiven by her father, at the Cape. Her husband soon followed her to the grave, and little Maud was left to the care of the Dutch boers on the farm which the poor clergyman had taken. But old Sir Lancelot, who long had chewed

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Drawn by George H. Thomas.

CHRISTMAS WITH SIR LANC



WITH SIR LANCELOT.

See the Story of "George Tresham's Christmas Days."

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the bitter end of his pride in silence and heartburning love, gave way. He sent for the child to England, had her at his home, and adopted her as his own, lavishing on her all that great wealth of affection which had remained stored up since his daughter's flight. She was the sunshine of the place, and the old man seemed never thoroughly happy when she was out of his sight. The title and the estates would go to his nephew, an archaeological gentleman, for whom genial old Sir Lancelot had a great contempt; but a private purse was being made up for Maud, and added to whenever there was opportunity.

'It was a pretty sight to see this lovely child sitting on the old man's knee, and twining her arms round his neck, like some thin sprig of eglantine encircling a sturdy old oak, and it was a prettier still to see them together afterwards in the great hall; for there was no mistake about the manner in which Christmas was kept at Bellew Hall. Across the dogs of the enormous deep embrasures of fireplaces, lay huge Yule logs, emitting genial warmth and grateful smell, and sputtering and cracking as though they too enjoyed the season and expressed themselves as best they might. All the furniture and lumber had been cleared out to leave a large space for dancing; a band of "musicianers," as the country people called them had been laid on; the lights shone bravely, and were reflected from the old polished oak-wainscoting. Here and there loomed darkly from the walls a trophy of *stags'* antlers, hunting-whips, otter-spears and rifles, and a panoply of old armour, long unused and rusted, but telling in many dents and bruises, and dark indelible stains here and there, of hard-fought battle-fields. Punctually at nine o'clock the fiddlers struck up the opening notes of Sir Roger, and the dance began. There was no escape, all must foot it; young and old; people who declared their dancing-days were over, and young boys fresh from school, who looked upon anything but a waltz as slow—all were compelled to dance Sir Roger. Of course Maud

was her grandfather's partner, and opened the ball. To this day I can see that scene—see her fairy form flying up the dance to meet Sir Lancelot, her long hair floating over her shoulders, her bright eyes glowing with pleasure, her tiny feet beating time to the music; can see the old gentleman tripping to meet her, his grave, old-fashioned courtesy battling with his overflowing happiness, and custom restraining his steps which innate feeling would have made reckless. Everybody looked on with delight, women and men admiring heartily, and even the young gentlemen from school condescending to express their opinion that "she was a nice little gyurl;" and when, at the last time, instead of merely giving her partner both her hands, she threw her arms round her grandfather's neck and nestled up into his embrace, we could restrain ourselves no longer, and a murmur of delight rang through the hall.

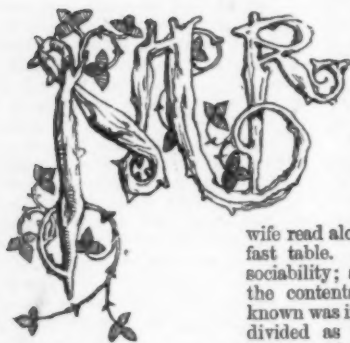
'That was the first time I saw Maud Bellew, and ten years elapsed before I set eyes upon her again. Our meeting was in the same house at the same time of year, but under what different circumstances! Old Sir Lancelot lay dead, and I had come down to attend the funeral and to see to affairs, for the new baronet was away in Rome, and not expected back for months. I found Maud a lovely girl of eighteen, tall, but with a rounded figure, and retaining all her childish beauty of face. I was at the hall for three weeks, and during that time we were constantly together, she assisting me in going through the papers and winding up her poor grandfather's affairs, and doing all with a sweetness of manner which grew upon me daily, and left me more and more hopelessly wounded at each evening's close. At last I took courage to speak, and asked her to become my wife.

'She started, blushed deeply, and the tears came into her eyes, as she said, "Oh, then you have not heard?"

'Not heard what? I asked hurriedly.

"That I am engaged to be married!"

A CHRISTMAS TREE PARTY.



and Mrs. West request the pleasure of Captain and Mrs. Keating and family's company on Tuesday, the 6th of January, at 9 P.M.

Such, headed by a most elaborate monogram, were the contents of a scented cream-coloured note which I extracted from the post-bag one morning in December, and which my

wife read aloud to all assembled at the breakfast table. Our county is not famous for sociability; so the excitement of my family on the contents of the note being generally known was immense. Opinions were strongly divided as to the nature of the proposed amusement; every form of evening entertainment, from a fancy ball to a tea-party in which weak tea and weaker conversation would be dispensed *ad libitum* to the guests, being successively discussed and successively rejected. With an inward shudder at the thought of driving five Irish miles and back on a winter's night, on the chance of receiving a cup of weak tea, and the certainty of influenza, I proposed that the invitation should be refused with thanks. This counsel, which was certainly wise, was received with such strong marks of disapprobation by the younger members of the family, and created such a cry of dismay, that at last, though not without strong misgivings, I consented to be sacrificed, a most reluctant victim, at the shrine of Pleasure. My consent, however, was qualified.

Under no circumstances would I accompany my children to a tea-party, *pur et simple*. Unless the object of the evening assemblage was thoroughly well defined, and promised to repay the exertion of a winter night's drive, I would not rashly promise to be of the party.

The subject of dress was next rather prematurely brought on the *tapis* by the ladies of the family. My eldest daughter, who had firmly settled in her own mind (the wish, we all know, is father to the thought), against all probabilities, that the affair would turn out to be a fancy ball, insisted that I should appear as a Zulu chief—blankets and a coronet of feathers being of that simple nature easily to be procured, even in a remote country place, and being certain to produce a unique and picturesque effect. My youngest child, Adolphus, a precocious boy of four, and, I need hardly say, his mother's darling, having conceived the idea that the party was to be composed of youths of his own age, at once proclaimed that he intended to go, very much to his elders' disgust.

It was finally determined that I should try and solve the great problems of the nature of the entertainment, and of the required dress, by riding over to Abbeyvale, my friends the Wests' residence, and judiciously there angle for the desired information. This project I carried into effect that very afternoon. On my arrival at the imposing red-brick Elizabethan mansion, which, enthroned on its double row of towers,

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glowed 'celestial rosy red' in the rays of the descending sun, I could not refrain an involuntary shudder at the possible prospect of ascending those same terraces in a snow-storm, with inverted umbrella. However, the weather was at present so mild, that, after all, the dreaded catastrophe might not occur, although buds at Christmas are well known to be the most delusive of hypocrites in their promises. Balancing thus, in my own mind, the weather probabilities, I rang at the glass door. A tall individual in very gorgeous cherry-coloured shorts, and calves specially fattened up for the Christmas festivities, very soon admitted me into the *sanctorum* of Mrs. West, where I found the eldest daughter of the house busily engaged at some feminine handiwork of that utter uselessness which characterizes articles at bazaars and Christmas trees in the aggregate. At once grasping at the idea, by a happy impulse, I exclaimed, blandly smiling, 'Oh! Miss West, how very kind it is of you to think of giving a Christmas tree!' Had a bombshell suddenly exploded at her feet, my young friend could not have been more startled, and losing her presence of mind, acknowledged the fact. I was then called upon to admire some many-coloured paper flowers, which I was informed were 'Parisian roses,' and which were, in truth, miracles of art. Mrs. West here entered, and on finding that I was possessed of the secret, proceeded to dilate at great length on the programme of the intended festivities on the 6th; and I was not sorry to find that some handsome as well as useful articles were to be included among the presents. Not that I hoped to become the happy owner of any of them, when I heard that the articles were to be ticketed and drawn for by corresponding numbers from a bag—my luck in such affairs generally consisting in finding myself the possessor of a shrivelled apple or an elderly orange. But I am a father, and rejoiced at the prospect of my luckier children providing themselves with valuable gifts, to say nothing of the attendance of a promised champagne

supper, in which my friend West's clever *chef* would cover himself with glory, I felt convinced.

Having thus successfully accomplished my mission, at least in my own estimation, I made my way homewards. My eldest daughter was, I think, a little put out at having to relinquish her favourite idea of a fancy ball; but any disappointment she may have felt was as nothing compared to the immense joy and triumph of Adolphus, at hearing that he had been specially invited by Mrs. West. We were all bound to go; and need I say, to amuse ourselves, as a matter of course.

As the eventful day drew near, we were kept in great suspense by the barometer. The mercury having suddenly fallen to 'change,' did not seem to relish its position there, but fell lower and lower, and was guilty of eccentricities innumerable. On the morning of the 5th, our uncertainties were put an end to by awakening to find the country covered with a white tablecloth of snow, and more softly, but most determinately, falling.

But it is well to take a cheery view of matters; at least so seemed to think the younger members of my family, who assured me at breakfast that snow was just the one thing that was wanting to complete the success of a Christmas party; more especially as fireworks, which, got up regardless of expense, were to form part of the programme of the evening's amusement, are never seen to such advantage as in snowy weather. 'Perhaps,' I remarked dubiously, 'but there might be such a thing as being snowed up on our way to Abbeyvale—or our drive there might be pleasantly diversified by missing the road, and finding a boghole.' The road to Abbeyvale, I must premise, ran through a bog, and was perfectly unprotected by any fence from the deep dykes by which it was bordered; and you may conceive, my reader, that there would be at least excitement in driving over such a road on a night when snow would render bog, road, and dykes one un distinguishable mass.

However, there was still some

thirty hours for the snow to cease, and summer weather to begin, and the latter contingency the young people seemed to think highly probable. On the morning of the 6th, my children were obliged to confess that summer had not come; in fact, the thermometer was nearly at zero, the cold intense, and the wind, which had risen, whirled the snow into drifts which to my mind presented rather a problem for wheels. The proposition of my second son, the mechanical genius of the family, that our closed carriage, a new one fresh from London, should be taken off its wheels and placed on hastily extemporized runners, I at once sternly negatived; and heartily congratulated myself on having, the moment the thermometer indicated frost, ordered post horses from the neighbouring town, in spite of the remonstrances of my wife, who was very severe on the fact that our own horses were never available when work was to be done.

All that day the snow fell unweariedly, uninterruptedly—all—even the most sanguine hopes of a clearing were shattered to pieces when dusk came on, and found the snow as busy as ever. I tried to reconcile my children to their inevitable disappointment, as even the most zealous of Irish post-horse keepers would hardly, I imagined, send his horses out on such a night. For my own part, I must confess, that secret joy welled unbidden in my heart, and that a feeling of relief predominated at the prospect of the almost unexpected release from the, to me, very problematical pleasures attending a drive through a snow-drift. At seven P.M. (dinner having been earlier than usual that we might be prepared for all eventualities) I ensconced myself in a thoroughly comfortable arm-chair, heightened my reading-lamp, and set myself to enjoy the last number of 'London Society,' in the cheery company of a blazing fire.

Imagine my feelings, sympathetic reader, if you can, at my visions of comfort being rudely dispelled in about five minutes by my second son's rushing in that dreadfully impetuous way natural to schoolboys,

into the room, and loudly proclaiming that the 'horses had come, and I must at once go and dress.' Apparently, though thunderstruck with dismay, I submitted in silence, and having dismissed my son to his toilet, and thus got him out of the way, I descended to the lower regions, for a surreptitious colloquy with the postboy, on the state of the roads. 'By dad thin, yer honour, they're jist as slippy as *grace*, and the ice bates Banagher,' was not very consolatory, the more so as I could not get him to say they were positively impracticable. A 'go-soon' runner, with a lantern, was necessary, it appeared, to accompany us, however, and we were to trust unlimitedly to our good star. Very gloomy I went to dress—but it was an inexorable necessity. I should have been considered a monster of unkindness had I not been willing to immolate myself for my family's sake. Behold us then packed tightly in and on the carriage—under the care of Paddy, the postilion, whom I fervently hoped was sober; but his attitudes on horseback were, to say the least, suspicious. Our approach was confessedly 'a mighty dangerous place,' (indeed, it was one of the steepest hills in the country,) therefore the assistance of all our retainers (including the cook, who appeared on the scene with an armful of shoes to be thrown consecutively after us 'for luck,') was called into requisition. Amidst a perfect Babel of advices, consolations, exhortations, shrieks, cursings, and blessings—and the ecstatic delight of the children, we finally reached the gate in safety; plunged triumphantly through a snow-drift there, and found ourselves on the public road. The ever vigilant eyes of my children at once discovered the fact that vehicles (*they said carriages*—I supposed *carts*) had recently passed and trodden a path for us. This, could it be considered as certain that the vehicles were *carriages*, would have dispelled one of the objects of my deep solicitude, namely, that on our arrival we should find ourselves the only guests at the Wests' hospitable mansion. Slow, and I am happy to be able to add,

sure, became meanwhile our motto. Progression at a pace quicker than a walk was mostly impracticable; but somehow or other we managed to surmount all difficulties, and in spite of various stoppages, finally got to Abbeyvale in safety. We were agreeably surprised to find, on our arrival there, that an elaborate covered way extended from the house to the gravel sweep, and very pretty was the vista that burst on our eyes as our carriage drew up. Greenhouse plants and flowering shrubs of every variety, decorated by different coloured lamps, formed banks on each side of the crimson carpeted footway; while from the arched roof, flags of many colours depended, decorated with Christmas devices. Within, the enormous Yule logs blazing in both the fireplaces of the entrance-hall formed a pleasing contrast to the cold out of doors. Here we were greeted by our jovial host, who had stationed himself there to receive the arriving guests, with a hearty welcome.

Having unsathed ourselves in an adjoining room, decorated with holly and ivy, we were ushered into the morning room, where Mrs. West, in all her bravery, stood, surrounded by all her guests. I felt, as I stood there, contemplating the many county families collected before me, that from henceforth my children could and would sing a never-ending song of triumph over the non-fulfilment of my prophecies of deserted rooms. In the meanwhile, the greetings over, we were all expectation for the grand climax. It came at last, when, finally—the intervening time being got through by the aid of tea, coffee, cakes, the meteorological observations so precious for conversational purposes, and the discussion of county affairs—the folding-doors between the room in which we were assembled and the drawing-room were thrown back, and the Christmas tree in all its glory burst upon us, and became at once the cynosure of all eyes. It was a stately silver fir, some sixteen or seventeen feet high; innumerable tapers of various colours illuminated the feathery branches, dependent from which, hung the chief objects of

attraction in the children's eyes—namely, presents in endless variety.

And here, perhaps, we may digress a little for the benefit of those future givers of Christmas-tree parties, who imagine that the mere sight of a decorated fir-tree ought to furnish quite sufficient gratification to the elders of the party, and that fathers and mothers of families are quite beyond the pale of receiving gifts. Could those benighted persons have but seen the intense gratification that suffused itself over the faces of the parents present—not called forth by the vision of the tree in its large decorated tub, and the dolls and playthings floating from the branches, but at the sight of handsome presents of which they were to be the recipients, they would soon discover their error. Apples and oranges may be very nice things in their own way, but the digestive powers of their eaters require to be in their second or third lustre, when any pleasure is to be derived from discussing them. In this case things were so arranged that *all* received a lasting memento of the evening; and this judicious plan we strongly recommend to the consideration of all future Christmas-tree givers.

After some time had been spent in admiring the tree and its rich harvest of presents, our host commenced business by handing about a bag full of tickets, each of which bore a number corresponding with that on some present on the tree. And now commenced the exciting part of the evening's amusements. Lost in conjecture as to what it would fall to my fate to receive, I cast a scrutinizing glance at the tree. Could I be doomed—terrible thought!—to become the unhappy possessor of one of those scarcely decently-clothed gutta-percha babies, which it almost made me blush to see even a glimpse of, instead of a handsome inkstand on which I had set my heart? I am not lucky, and consequently was pretty sure to draw an unfortunate number. A happy inspiration seized me—I cruised round the tree on a voyage of discovery, to find out the number on my cherished inkstand. It was 66, and 66, sure enough, I discovered in

the possession of a little child near me, in the costume so happily described by a writer of the present day as consisting of 'bare legs, bustle, and cocked-tailed petticoats.' By judicious bribery, I succeeded in persuading him to exchange tickets, and then, at peace in my own mind, I calmly awaited my turn in the distribution of prizes, which occupied some time, as each recipient who considered himself unfortunate in the article received had many plausible excuses for endeavouring to effect an exchange; and I am sorry to say that one little child, who became the owner of an envied toy, was at once assaulted by an unruly cherub, and the coveted prize was obtained after a sharp passage-at-arms, in the course of which shattered relics were left on the battle-field.

At last 66 was called, and I stepped forward; not, however, to receive my cherished inkstand, with its endless conveniences for a study-table, but a hideous china monster, who nodded his head mockingly at me, as he was placed in my extended hand. The shock was terrible, and I at once objected to the leering member of the 'celestial' empire. Alas! in vain. The number on the inkstand was 99, and in my hurried progress round the tree I had not perceived that I only saw it in its *inverted* shape of 66. This was a terrible consummation to my fondly-cherished, and, as I had thought, also, well-grounded hopes; but there was no resource, and I was obliged to acquiesce; and I had the pang of seeing the inkstand and its belongings inexorably handed over to a stern matron, who was quite, too evidently, a utilitarian to be cajoled by any amount of 'soft sawder' to exchange it for a useless mandarin. My children had been more fortunate in obtaining the objects of their desires; Adolphus, in particular, revelled in the possession of a long-wished-for, terribly noisy drum, which I, however, privately, in my own mind, doomed to destruction on the first favourable opportunity. Much amusement was afforded by the incongruity of some of the presents to their recipients: thus the bishop of

the diocese, who was present, and whose youthful deeds of prowess on the moor and by the river-side, still furnish a fruitful topic for reminiscences and anecdote by the peasant's fireside, received a miniature fowling-piece; and Count G—, a German visitor to our county, whose long dishevelled locks hung wildly over his shoulders, received a 'pocket-comb and scissors,' all in one. My well-turned congratulations to my foreign friend on the possession of such useful toilet articles were still on my lips when we were summoned to witness the acting of some charades in an adjoining room, which was turned into an extemporized theatre for the occasion. Three words were acted with far above average amateur skill, but, as usual, were not all guessed by the audience; after which the sounds of a gong proclaimed the fact that supper was the next stage of the proceedings. The difficult operation of marshalling so large a company being at length concluded, we all progressed through the intervening apartments to the dining-room. There, on the tables where the supper was laid out, the delicate frosted silver foliage of the centre-pieces and *épergnes* vied with richly-tinted, natural leaves of the exotics from the stoves and greenhouses. The eye of the epicure could also dwell with pleasure upon the various *chefs-d'œuvre* of culinary art produced by my friend West's clever *chef*, which I was happy to perceive appeared to be thoroughly appreciated by an elderly gentleman, who, after hovering around the tables, glass in eye, for some time, beaming with delight, finally settled himself for good opposite a *pâté de fois gras*, which promised to repay his cautious foresight. For my own part, I found myself seated between two ladies, who took vastly different views of the whole evening's proceedings. While my friend on the left saw everything through rose-coloured glasses, and was delighted alike with the journey through the snow—'a most picturesque drive, which reminded her of happy days in Russia,' and the handsome ring she had received from the tree—my neighbour on the right objected, on

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principle, to night drives in winter—and thoroughly reprobated the 'useless extravagance' displayed in the Christmas-tree presents; and, sorest point of all, dwelt with withering sarcasm on Mrs. West's utter incapability for learning the proper precedence of her guests.

The supper was progressing towards its termination, when I was informed by a friend that it had been determined that a speech of thanks

should be made to our host for his handsome entertainment, on the part of the children, and that the onerous office had been unanimously given to me. Not being the least ambitious either of oratorical failures or successes, I begged to refuse the proffered honour, but finally yielded to the solicitations of my friend. The auspicious moment for expressing the infants' gratitude for benefits received appeared to have arrived,



when a cessation of the clatter of knives and plates, accompanied by a lull in conversation, announced that the pangs of nature had been for the present satisfied, and I rose to my feet, but only to find myself confronted by my stout, elderly friend in front of the remains of the *pâté de fois gras*, who had apparently found the supper such a success in a culinary point of view that he wished to place on record his gratitude to the

donor. I at once gave way in favour of my friend opposite, who, after touching rather incoherently on various topics, at last allowed his feelings so entirely to overwhelm him that he became quite unintelligible, and subsided into his seat again amidst mingled cheers of laughter and derision. The speechifying was then brought to an abrupt conclusion by a notice that the fireworks were in progress, and the

company adjourned to the drawing-room to see this, the last stage of the evening's amusement.

For the next half-hour rockets, Catherine-wheels, &c., &c., delighted the beholders. At last a magnificent bouquet of many-coloured lights brought the pyrotechnic display to a close, and carriages began to be thought of. The difficult task of collecting my scattered flock of children now remained. As soon as I captured one, the rest eluded my grasp, and I began thoroughly to realize the truth of a saying frequently used by an old domestic servant of my own—namely, that it required the 'patience of Job, the strength of Samson, and the wisdom of Solomon' combined, to cope satisfactorily with children when their youthful minds are bent on the accomplishment of some desired project. At length, as other parents on the same errand collected and drew off their children, my task became easier; and Adolphus, the last of the missing ones, was finally victoriously driven from his ambush behind a curtain, just in time to prevent a private pyrotechnic display of his own, in which he was assisted by a kindred spirit, and to which the curtain would probably have fallen a victim. When we reached the entrance-hall, we found it filled by the departing guests in every variety of costume that could be supposed equal to all possible weather emergencies. Conspicuous amongst the crowd my neighbour at the supper-table appeared in a very striking Russian costume of fur, whose history she was relating in a very prolix way to Count G——, who, shivering before her in the thinnest of paletots, seemed fully to realize her remarks on the severity of the weather.

But what stops the outward stream of departing guests? Voices, too, in noisy vituperation, reach the ear: our host descends to ascertain the cause, and shortly returns, hot and excited, and requests me to use my influence with my servants, who, he informs me, are the cause of the disturbance. I hastened to the door, and the first object that met my horrorstricken gaze was the figure of our postilion, who stood, the

lantern in his hand dimly burning and all awry, smiling blandly at me as I advanced towards him. A glance satisfied me as to his condition. His coadjutor, 'the gossoon,' whom he had insisted on bringing (considerably to my dissatisfaction), had, it appeared, marked out, opposite the door, a sacred ring, into which no carriage was to intrude, and was busily employed in personally opposing the approach of all vehicles with a blackthorn stick. On further investigation I failed to descry our carriage, and requested an explanation from some of the other servants. It appeared that our precious retainers had met some convivial spirits in the public-house of the adjoining village to which they had betaken themselves, and were only returning from the scene of their dissipation, when, seeing lights and people, they had instinctively made their way to the crowd, their bewildered faculties causing them to imagine that a wake, or some such festive scene, was in progress, at which they felt themselves pre-eminently called upon to assist. As I turned to re-enter the house, I had the satisfaction of seeing 'gossoon' suddenly seized from behind by some of the Wests' people, and carried forcibly off the scene, while Paddy, the postilion, followed, fleetly serpentine along. This was a pleasant position in which to find oneself, and I had to throw myself on the good nature of our host: if he could supply the places of our two incompetent drinkers by even one sober man, all might yet be well. This, happily, was easily accomplished; our posters, not being inebriated, were still available, and we departed, hoping our misfortunes had come to an end.

Vain expectation! After passing the approach-gates, we were left to our own resources for pioneering a road over the untrodden snow. For the first mile we proceeded without accident, and I was sinking into the repose that I felt I so well deserved, when, in descending Ballinagrattish-carnahey Hill, before reaching the bog, a sudden lurch forward, a plunge, a struggle, announced that one of the horses was down, and my

visions of dream-land were suddenly dispersed. My eldest son had to descend from the box, and I, from the interior of the carriage, however unwillingly, to the rescue, to the great detriment both of our tempers and dress-boots, and with infinite trouble to raise the animal on his legs again, who was fortunately, as our driver remarked, 'not a haporth the worse of his tumble.' Placing our trust in Providence, we commenced our journey afresh. The four or five consecutive hours' snow while we were at Abbeyvale, had, of course, effectually removed all our former tracks on the unfrequented road, and crossing the bog, where not a bush or tree was to be seen to mark our way, was perilous in the extreme. At last we came to a dead stop, and the driver requested to know if we were on the right road. A dreadful suspicion came into my mind. About half-way across the bog our road home diverged at an angle from the main road, and on questioning the driver, we found

that the turn had too evidently not been taken, and that we had been, for the last hour, progressing in an entirely wrong direction. There was nothing for it but to retrace our steps; and it was with the deepest feelings of gratitude that we at last found ourselves, at 5 A.M., on our own steps, intensely cold, certainly, but never did home appear so attractive. We had been almost given up for lost, and were just in time to stop a party that was about starting to rescue us from the perils of the bog, in which we were supposed to have been engulfed.

We found, subsequently, that our adventures returning home sank into insignificance compared with those of some of the other guests. Count G—, in particular, told me that to his dying day he should never forget the ditch in which he miserably spent some hours (until rescued by some Irish natives) on the morning he returned home from the Abbeyvale Christmas tree.

O.

ARTISTS' NOTES FROM CHOICE PICTURES.

Shakespeare's Twelfth Night.

IN the Olivia of the 'Twelfth Night,' Shakespeare has presented us with one of the most graceful of his many matchless pictures of womanhood; and, in painting the Garden Scene, Maclise has sought to give visible form to the loveliness of which Shakespeare has expressed the inner sense and secret purpose. The Lady Olivia's was, by the confession of one who felt herself supplanted by it, a face in which was 'beauty truly blent,' but now troubled by many contending feelings and emotions. To paint it truly was no easy task.

Maclise had painted many handsome faces before—he has painted many since. He began with those laughing, dark-eyed Irish lasses gathered together at Hallow E'en, of which you may any day see merry, barefooted, living examples in plenty about the mud cabins of the Wicklow mountains. He has continued them by the score in the prouder dames, whose bright eyes

rain influence at the Vow of the Peacock, Strongbow's Marriage, and many another scene of gaudy pageantry. But perhaps in none has his power been more pleasantly and unaffectedly shown than in the unpretending little picture from which these two charming heads are taken. It was painted in 1840, when the artist, though yet numbered among the young men—he was just nine-and-twenty—was in the full flush of success; a lion in May Fair, a newly-elected R.A.

Exquisite is the tact with which Shakespeare has drawn the Olivia of his comedy. Viola is one of the very gentlest and purest of Shakespeare's creations. Olivia is as true a lady, but with more of impulse. Her very melancholy is a little strained—has something of wilfulness in it—is cherished with almost demonstrative determination. Out of love to her dead brother she has abjured the sight and company of men. Nay,

the very sun shall not look upon her unveiled:—

'The element itself, till seven years' heat,
Shall not behold her face at ample view.'

Yet is the resolution given to the winds almost as soon as uttered. Though the Duke can gain no sign of favour, his handsome messenger has but to ask, and the veil is at once withdrawn. Still even when she is giving to her impulsiveness the wildest play, and where any other dramatist would have failed utterly, the great master of the human heart never suffers her to lose her hold of our esteem. Always is she noble, gentle, truehearted, lady-like; never uttering an unfeminine word, or seeming to breathe an unholy thought.

One might have wished to see how a painter like Maclise would contrast two such fair creatures as Olivia and Viola. He has preferred to place beside the sensitive Olivia that lighthearted madcap Maria—simply a rattling, heedless maiden, but with a sharp tongue, and jests in plenty at her fingers' ends, and, moreover, apt to use them—as the Clown tells us, 'in good faith very apt,' altogether 'as witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria.' She has made a gull of poor Malvolio—of old 'sad and civil,' now 'sick of self-love,' 'turned heathen, a very renegade,' has enticed him into the garden, there to show himself before his mistress tricked out in yellow stockings and cross-gartered, kissing his silly hands, and smiling 'his face into more lines than are in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies.'

Maria, shading her face from the sun, and scarce hiding her merriment even from her mistress, is enjoying the jest without stint. As well she may: for by it she has not merely punished one she has for some time been longing to mortify, but won her a husband in bluff, roystering Sir Toby, who vows in her absence to 'marry the wench for this device, and ask no other dowry with her but such another jest,' and when he meets her afterwards protests to her, in his enthusiasm, that he will follow her 'to the gates of Tartar—thou most ex-

cellent devil of wit.' There we may leave him, in the charitable hope that he will not burn his fingers.

But before leaving Maria, we must note how happily the painter has marked the difference between the buoyant, cheery, mischievous cleverness of the maid and the refinement of style and sensitive delicacy of temperament of the mistress.

You see at a glance that one is the perpetrator of the mischief: the sad, wondering, pitying face of the other tells as plainly that she is as innocent of the deception as the unlucky victim himself. And how happy a stroke is that of the painter's in making her turn, with a half-frightened expression, to place her hand mechanically on that of her attendant! Even the little dog opens wide his eyes in mute astonishment at Malvolio's fantastic folly, though he is too well bred a courtier to quit his mistress's side, or to express his surprise by a single bark at the varlet's presumption.

Maclise's picture is, in fact, a well-expressed and well-considered commentary on this passage of the poet, an admirable and suggestive dissertation on the personages, as well as a pleasant realization of the scene. It is the true expression of his own conception of the poet's meaning, and therefore valuable, whether it agree with your conception of it or not, as the careful utterance of an intelligent mind necessarily must be.

With a picture like this before us, there is a great temptation to say something of its technical qualities. But it would hardly be in place to do so here; and, after all, it is with the persons represented that the real interest lies.

[— 'A great while ago the world began';

and ever since it began there have been Malvolios to smile, and kiss the hand, and go cross-gartered for heedless woman's sake; and Marias to befool and laugh at them; and Olivias to pity even when they could not love them; and, doubtless, Violas who never told their love, and found in the end their reward in their reticence. 'And thus the whirligig of Time brings in his revenges.'

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From the Painting by D. Maclise, R.A.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

[See "Artists' Notes on Choice Pictures."

CHRISTIANITY AND CHRISTIANITY

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CHRISTMAS SMILES AND CHRISTMAS TEARS;

OR,

The Story of the Pantaloon's Daughter.

I AM a call-boy, and I have been a call-boy ever since I was ten. I am five-and-forty now, and getting old and grizzled, but still a call-boy, and I dare say I shall remain a call-boy to the end of my days. In my line we never grow to be men. It's always 'boy' to the last, if we were to live to be as old as Methuselah. It was the same with the postboys. They were nearly always little chaps, and in their caps and jackets looked just like juveniles. I have heard it was gin taken with their pap that did it in their case—I mean stopped their growth. In ours I think it's owing to the gas. I should say I have lived pretty nigh twenty years of my life by gaslight. I go to the theatre every night at six o'clock

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and never leave until twelve, and most of the time I stand under the reflector on the first landing of the dressing-room staircase. It's monotonous kind of work to stand there night after night for so many hours, listening to the pieces that I know all by heart, and calling up stairs to the actors when they're wanted to go on. It's dry work, too; for the gas is very hot, and the dust comes up from the stage when they change the scenes. I have seen a good deal of life, though, from that landing; and I am sorry now that I did not begin to keep a diary five-and-twenty years ago. It would have been worth something to publish by this time. There's not many that have been so long in the line as I

*D

have. Call-boys mostly become low comedians or clowns. You see, they stand a very good chance if they have any talent and ambition. They're always on the spot if anything happens, and they know all the parts from hearing them night after night. Perhaps an actor is taken ill some night at the last moment, and the stage is waiting. What's to be done? There is nobody who knows the part. Well; the call-boy hears all this, and if he has any pluck in him he says, 'I know the part—I don't mind going on for it;' and perhaps at that moment the audience is getting very impatient, and the manager says, 'Very well, get into the things, and look sharp,' and on he goes, and perhaps makes a hit. After that you may depend upon it he will not be content to be a call-boy; and perhaps the manager is only too glad of a chance of playing him off, cheap, against the leading man. Lots of call-boys have got on in this way, but most of them have become pantomimists. Call-boys are generally good at hanky-panky. I might have been a clown myself, for I have practised all clown's tumbling tricks on my landing during what I call my waits. But I never had any ambition, leastwise no spirit; and so it is that I have never risen.

Still for all that, there are persons of less importance in the theatre than me. In my own way I have a good deal of influence, and know more of what is going on than any one. Everybody in the theatre, from the supers and ballet-girls up to the manager himself, has to pass under my eye on their way up to the dressing-rooms, and as they all depend upon me for their 'calls,' they are all civil. 'Good evening, Robert.' 'How are you to-night, Robert?' I get that from everybody, even from the manager himself, who, though he has bullied everybody else in the theatre, has never bullied me. That's one of the advantages of being call-boy. I am a sort of neutral in the place. Nobody is jealous of me; and my position at the bottom of the stairs gives me opportunities of doing many people favours. The tip-top

members of the company will come to me sometimes and say, 'Robert, is he in his room?' meaning the manager. I know pretty well what they want to see him about—a re-engagement, a benefit, a new part, or something of that sort—and I say 'Yes, he is in his room; but he is in an awful bad temper to-night.' And they understand what that means, and don't go near him. And then again another time I will say, 'Do you want to see him?' and they'll say, 'Yes;' and then I'll say, 'You'll find him in his room; there's nobody with him, and he's in a first-rate temper to-night.' And they say 'Thank you, Robert,' and perhaps drop me sixpence or a shilling to wash the dust out of my throat; for I always tell everybody that passes that it's very dry at that corner. Ah! I'll be bound to say I have saved many a poor girl her engagement by sending her up just at the right time. I always know by his face what sort of a tune the manager is in, and he can't get up to his room without passing me.

Perhaps you wouldn't believe it now; but I have been the making of one or two dramatic authors in my time. Managers don't care much about dramatic authors, and always keep out of their way if they can. Even such as have the *entrée* behind the scenes can't always get at the manager. The doorkeeper has the same sort of favour for a dramatic author that a watch-dog has for a burglar. If an author asks for the manager at the stage-door, he is almost certain to be told that he is not in the house. But if he comes to me and behaves civil, I can put him in the way of getting what he wants—which is a quiet minute or two with the manager to talk about his piece. I remember a young man coming to me night after night to ask for him, but as he was a stranger to me, I always said the manager was engaged, or wasn't in, or some bit of that sort, which it is part of the duty of theatre officials to tell. At last, however, my heart softened towards him, for he was a polite, kind-spoken young man, and always carried a roll of paper in his breast-pocket, which I guessed

was a play of some kind which he wanted produced. One night when I sent him away with the usual answer he looked so disappointed that I felt for once quite ashamed of having told the usual lie. When he came again the manager was really not in; but I told him to go and sit in the green-room, and I would let him know when he came. He did so, and when the manager arrived I took the young man up to his room and knocked at the door, and left him there to manage the rest for himself. He remained in the room nearly half an hour, and when he came down his cheeks were flushed and his eyes sparkled, and he shook me kindly by the hand and thanked me. A short time afterwards he had a piece produced at our house. It was a great success, and he has had many successes since at our house and others. You know his name very well; all the town knows it; but perhaps it would never have been known at all but for me. However, he is welcome to all I did for him; for he is a gentleman, and is not above leaving the big folks and coming and offering his hand to Robert the call-boy, and asking him what he'll take to wash the dust down. I have known others again come to me in a grand bumptious sort of way that I wouldn't have moved a finger to serve. I might have helped them to what they wanted many a time, if they had only been a little civil and treated the call-boy like a fellow-creature.

Ah, sir, I have seen some very real life behind these canvas scenes. Grief and suffering and pain have many a night passed up those stairs when you have seen all smiling and lighthearted in front. The friends and acquaintances of my life have been made on this landing under the reflector. (I am speaking as if I were standing there now.) I have known them here, mixed with them here, conversed with them here, and nowhere else. This strip of boarding and these stairs have been my world. And friends and acquaintances that I have made here have grown old, and seen joy and sorrow, and passed away to the

grave, and I have missed them only in their relation to these stairs, which they have gone up and down o' nights in their paint and strange dresses.

In all my time there was only one person belonging to the theatre that I knew outside it, and that was old Peter Doyle the Pantaloon. He lived near me over the water, close to the Vauxhall Walk; and at pantomime time we used to walk home together. Peter's poor bit of a lodging over yonder was the scene of a drama in real life that I have never seen equalled on the stage, and I have seen a few dramas in my time, as you may believe. Peter had been Pantaloon at our house for years, and he continued to be engaged for Christmas long after he was past his work. He was like Herr von Joel, and was retained on the establishment in consideration of his long and faithful services. But a Christmas came when even long and faithful services would no longer balance Peter's infirmity, which was a lame leg, and he was told when he sent in his application that he wouldn't be wanted. I was sorry for Peter, for he was a great crony of mine, and he had a wife and family to keep, the youngest, a girl, being only nine years of age. You see Peter was not such a very old man, but he had had a bad accident in the country from falling through a trap, and that and rheumatism crippled him; and as you can imagine, a crippled Pantaloon ain't much use. I missed Peter sadly, for he dressed in a little room close by my landing, and I often used to run in and have a chat with him. He had all sorts of queer ways, and no end of funny stories to tell. You may know what a quaint kind of character he was when I tell you how he used to get his supper. The people about the neighbourhood all knew him, for Peter was fond of looking in at their shop windows and chatting to them, though he never bought much. The butcher round the corner was a particular friend of Peter's, and always cut him a good big quarter of a pound of steak, and didn't charge him too much for it. But

*D 2

one night Peter was rather short of the browns, as he called them. He had only threepence. 'What am I to do, Robert?' he said; 'if I pay for the steak I shall have nothing left for the buster and the beer.' He always called a penny loaf a 'buster.'

'Well,' I said, 'stick it up, Peter.'

'No, no, lad,' said Peter; 'I don't like getting into debt; it's against my principle, and, as somebody said, my interest. No, that won't do; but here, I'll tell you what—Take that penny and ask the old woman,—that was the old woman who did the 'cleaning'—to go round and give my compliments to Mr. Collins, and ask him for a penn'orth of meat for my dog.'

'But you haven't got a dog, Peter,' I said.

'Oh yes, I have,' he said; 'a regular performing dog—sits up on his hind legs all day long, and always ready for his victuals. You just see how he'll put away the penn'orth of meat.'

Well, I gave the old woman Peter's penny, and sent her round, and she came back with a great piece of beef as big as my hand.

'There's a penn'orth, Peter,' I said.

'By Jove, yes,' he said; 'that's more than I get for threepence for myself. That's "love me love my dog," and no mistake. Where's the gridiron?' And Peter put the gridiron on the fire and cooked the beef; and when I came in again presently I found him eating it.

'You see the animal feeding,' said Peter; 'will you have a bit? It's my belief he's cut it off the rump, for it's as tender as a chicken.' After this Peter never sent for a quarter of a pound for himself, but always for a penn'orth for his dog.

It was a sad blow to Peter when he got the manager's letter; for he had counted on his engagement as usual, and had made all his little arrangements. However, the company subscribed a little money for him, and the manager offered to take his little daughter Rose on for a fairy in the pantomime. Peter was doatingly fond of Rose. She was the youngest of his family, and

the only girl; the others being great louts of boys who always kept the poor old chap in hot water. Peter did not much like his little darling going on the stage without some one to look after her; but when the manager told him that he might come to the theatre every night and look after her himself, he was reconciled to it, and little Rose was engaged. It was a matter of no consequence except to Peter himself, for Rose only went on in a group of little fairies, and there was a whole regiment of mothers waiting every morning at the stage-door with no end of little candidates for such parts. It was, however, of very great consequence to Peter; for Rose was engaged at a salary of seven shillings a week—they gave her more than the usual figure for her father's sake—and as Peter was doing nothing, this helped to keep the pot a-boiling. For the matter of that I fully believe that all that went into Peter's pot that winter came out of Rose's seven shillings.

Little Rose was very quick at learning, and the ballet-master took a fancy to her, and put her in the front row; and the people in front soon began to notice her, she was so pretty. Peter brought her to the theatre every evening, and came again when the pantomime was over and took her home; but he rarely came in. He didn't like to be 'behind' with us all, knowing that he was no longer one of us, and had nothing to do in the theatre. He used to wait at a public-house close by where he was well known, and it didn't cost him much for his beer there. There was a lot of young fellows frequented the house who felt it a privilege to treat Peter. Peter would no sooner go in and show his comical face than it would be—'What will you take, Peter?' from half a dozen of them at once. And Peter would answer in his quaint way, 'Well, since you are so kind, I will take two D of gin, cold, and a little leaf;' which meant two pennyworth of cold gin-and-water and a paper of tobacco.

But to go on with my story. At the end of the run of the pantomime little Rose was discharged, with

many more whose services would not be required until Christmas came round again. Peter was thrown on his beam-ends. Now that Rose's salary was gone there was nothing coming in at all. Peter began to look about for something to do. He offered himself at one or two of the minor theatres for utility business; but his lameness was against him, and no one would have him. He tried to get pupils for the stage, but most of the amateurs aspired to the higher walks of the drama, and who would go to a broken-down Pantaloon to learn to read Shakspeare? Then he thought of setting up a photographic shop; but the expense of the glass house and the apparatus was more than he could manage. Peter could find nothing to turn his hand to, and he took it very much to heart, and became low and desponding. At length, however, something turned up. He came to me one Sunday morning with a bright face to tell me all about it.

'Robert,' he said, 'I've met with an opening at last.'

I said I was glad to hear it, and asked what it was.

'What do you think, Robert?'

'Can't say, I'm sure,' I said; 'anything in your own line?'

'No, not exactly,' he said.

'Elocution?'

'No.'

'Photographs?'

'No; but you'll never guess, Robert. What do you say to the darky business?'

'The darky business!' I said; 'whatever do you mean, Peter?'

'Why,' he said, 'the nigger serenading line.'

'Lor', Peter,' I said; 'you must be joking.'

'Not a bit of it,' he said; 'you know I can play the banjo; and I've an offer to join a troupe; and why not? I must do something to support my family.'

'How did you hear of it?' I said.

And then he told me all about it.

'You know the chap with the wooden leg that lodges at the sweep's next door but one. You've often seen him playing the tambourine in a band of niggers. Well, yesterday I saw him coming along, with his

face washed and dressed in his best Sunday-going suit; and I said, knowing him from being a neighbour—

"Hollo, William! what's up?"

"I am going to bury the banjo," he says.

"Bury the banjo?" I says; "whatever do you mean, William?"

"Oh," he says, "Joe Barton, as played the banjo in our band is dead; and we're going to bury him to-day down at Woking. It's a bad job for us. I don't know what we shall do without him."

'What Bill said set me a-thinking, and I watched for him when he came back in the afternoon. I saw that he was a bit screwed as he came by, and I did not speak to him then; but I called in at his lodgings after tea, and found him sitting in a chair, with his head resting in his hands.

"You're not very well, William," I said.

"No," he said; "I can't help thinking of poor Joe as we laid under the earth to-day. I took a goodish drop to drink on the road home; but it hasn't improved my spirits, but rather the contrary. Joe and me were great friends—brothers, I may say. He left me all that belonged to him. There's the legacy in the corner there; I sha'n't have to pay duty on it."

'The legacy was Joe's serenading clothes—a long-tailed blue coat, a pair of bed-curtain trousers, and a white hat with crape round. They lay in a heap, with poor Joe's banjo on the top.

'I took up the instrument, and ran my fingers over the strings. Bill took no notice for a minute or so, until I began to play "Uncle Ned," when he looked up at me curiously.

"By Jove!" he said, "you can play it."

"Yes," I said; "I can a little; but I am rather out of practice. If I could get anything to do at it I should soon get my hand in again."

"What!" he said, "you don't mean to say that *you*—"

"Why not?" I said, "I can't get anything to do in my own line, and beggars mustn't be choosers;

besides, I think I rather should like the line."

"You would?" he said, eagerly.

"Yes," I said, "I would."

"What do you say, then, to joining us, and taking poor Joe's place?"

"I said, 'I'm your man.'"

"Well, the upshot of it was that Bill introduced me to the other members of the troupe, and I played a tune or two to them, and they said I would do with a little practice; and to-morrow night I am going to rehearse with them at Bill's lodgings, and the day after we open for the season. And now what do you think of it?"

"Well," I said, "Peter, it's honest; and I dare say there's a good bit of money to be picked up at it."

"Yes," he said, "there is; Bill told me that one rainy day about a month ago they played the whole of an afternoon up a court in the Strand, and took two pound fourteen. The only thing that troubles me is the wife."

"How do you mean?" I said.

"Well," he said, "she mightn't like it. Her father, you see, was a master pork-butcher in the Walworth Road, and she's rather proud."

"Well," I said, "I wouldn't tell her about it for a bit."

"No," he said, "that's just how I mean to act. I'll keep it dark as long as I can; and perhaps the halpence will reconcile her."

So Peter joined the troupe, and went to work, and did very well. Dressed up as a dandy, with his face blacked, nobody recognized him but me; and of course I kept the secret. His wife, however, after a bit began to wonder how he got all the money; for he sometimes took home as much as seven or eight shillings for a day's work. Peter put her off as long as he could; but she got to close quarters with him at last, for she was proud and honest than most in her station. Peter told me all about how she found him out. She was quite huffed with him because he would not tell her what he did; and one night, when they had quarrelled and made it up again, she said to him with tears in her eyes—

"I hope you are not a thief, Peter, dear?"

Peter laughed at first at the idea of the thing; but got indignant at last, and told her that his employment was honest, though humble—very humble.

"Very humble," she said; "then I know what it is, Peter."

"Well, what?" he said.

"Why," she said, "I have noticed that every night when you come home, you have a black rim all round your neck, and smudges of black about your ears. You don't like to tell me, Peter, but I know what you have done; you have turned chimney-sweep."

Peter could not help roaring with laughter at this; but the wife and he got so thick that night that he was obliged to confess. She didn't like it, and talked a good deal about her father the pork-butcher; but when Peter turned out his pockets, she dried her tears, and they had a nice hot supper, and agreed to say nothing more about it, and keep the secret from little Rose.

Peter did very well in the summer-time; but in the winter it was all over with the outdoor nigger-serenading business. The troupe had then to look out for engagements at parties; but there were not many of them to be got. So Peter was very thankful when little Rose was taken on again at the theatre to play in the pantomime. She was engaged to play a fairy, and represent the Queen of the Flowers in the transformation scene. As she had to stand upon a piece of wood that rose through the stage nearly to the flies, Peter came in every night to see her securely strapped on; and then he would wait chatting with me until the scene was over and little Rose was ready to go home. One night, however, Peter had an engagement, and did not come. As bad luck would have it little Rose got very nervous, let go her hold upon the iron bar, and fell head downwards, hanging to the scene by her strapped foot. The accident occurred just as the curtain was coming down upon the red fire; and the people in front knew nothing about it. I was the first to run to

Rose's assistance. Poor thing! she was badly bruised and cut with the projecting pieces of the scene, and her arms were bleeding. A carpenter held her up while I unstrapped her foot, and we took her into the housekeeper's room and laid her on a sofa. The manager came in in great excitement, and was for sending her to the hospital; but little Rose when she recovered a little asked for her father, and said she would rather go home. Peter not being there, the manager asked if any one knew where he lived; and I said I did.

'Very well,' he said; 'you get a cab and take her home, and send for a doctor to her at my expense. I don't think now she is so much hurt as frightened.'

So a cab was called, and little Rose was helped into it; and I went away home with her, leaving word with the stage-door keeper to find out Peter and let him know what had happened.

Mrs. Doyle was in a terrible way when I took the poor girl home, and cried and wrung her hands in great distress. However, when she heard Rose speak she stirred up a little, and undressed her and put her to bed, while I ran out for the doctor. The doctor—a very young man—came in directly; but when he saw Rose, and I told him the nature of the accident, he said she ought to be taken to the hospital at once, as it was very serious. Mrs. Doyle, however, would not hear of this; and the doctor said in that case he must call in another surgeon; and giving some directions to Mrs. Doyle, he hurried away for that purpose. Mrs. Doyle was now very much alarmed. Rose lay in the bed as pale as death, her eyes closed and her white lips slightly parted. There were no signs of life about her except the red scores upon her arms, which had been bruised and torn by the rough woodwork of the platform from which she had fallen.

'Good God!' Mrs. Doyle exclaimed, 'she is dead!'

At that moment there was a noise of hurried footsteps on the stairs, and some one entered. It was Peter in his nigger serenader's dress, with

his face blacked, and his banjo in his hand. He caught the terrible word 'dead,' and rushed to the bedside. He threw his hat and his banjo from him, and dropped upon his knees, taking Rose's cold white hand in his.

'My Rose! my dear, darling Rose!' he cried; 'dead! no, no, no; it cannot be. Rose, Rose, speak to me, darling! speak to me!'

In his frantic energy he pulled the poor girl towards him, but her body was like a dead thing, and when he relaxed his hold upon her hand it fell upon the counterpane like lead.

Peter rose as if suddenly horror-struck, and sunk into a chair. He sat there for some moments speechless, gazing in a stupefied way at his darling's blanched and motionless face, and the big tears rolled from his eyes and made white courses down his blackened face as they fell. At length he started up wildly, and cried, 'Yes, yes, she is dead, and it was I who killed her; I, her father! I was not there to see her safe to-night, as I ought to have been. If I had been there, this would not have happened. I—I have done it.' And he sank into the chair again, and hid his face in his hands, and sobbed like a child.

It was a strange, pitiful sight to see;—a father in that fantastic dress associated only with mockery and antics and nonsense, sitting there crushed, and broken, and weeping.

But Rose was not dead. When the doctors came in and gave her a restorative, she revived and opened her eyes. Peter was for rushing to clasp her in his arms, but I held him back, pointing to his dress.

'You will only frighten her, Peter,' I said; 'she has never seen you like this.' But he would not listen, and rushed to the bedside. Rose saw the strange figure, and shrank back and uttered a feeble scream. Peter turned away immediately, and ran from the room, tearing the fantastic rags from his body as if he had been mad. He came back presently, his face hastily washed, and in his own clothes. Rose had revived in the mean time,

and she knew him now, and gladdened poor Peter's heart with a smile and the whispered word 'father.' He was frantic with joy. But he had still a bitter grief in store for him. His darling Rose, his pet, his pride, the hope of the family—nay, its stay and support—was crippled for life.

Poor Peter's prospect was now a very dark one; but things came round in a strange way to bring help to him and happiness to others. What I am going to tell now came to my knowledge as I stood on my landing at the bottom of the stairs. After Rose's accident, the actors and actresses, as they went up and down, constantly asked me about her, and nearly every one of them sent her a little money. Actors are very kind-hearted in that way. But of all the persons in the theatre, no one took so much interest in Rose as Miss Everton. You remember what a favourite Miss Everton was at this theatre some few years ago. When she came here from the country she took everybody by storm, for she was not only a very clever actress, but she was very handsome and very pretty. All the young fellows about town were mad after her, and they filled the stalls night after night to see her. I took a great liking to Miss Everton from the first, for she was always very friendly and very chatty, and her success made no difference in her. But I trembled for her sometimes, when I saw how she was run after by the young swells. I knew that she was in the midst of a great blazing fire of temptation, for the stage-door was beset every night by her admirers, and a fast young baronet, who was privileged to come behind the scenes, fairly laid siege to her, and brought her all sorts of expensive presents. One night it was a ring, and the next a pair of bracelets; and she always showed them to me as she came up stairs, and how her eyes did sparkle over them, woman-like! But I knew that these presents boded no good to her, for the young baronet was a notorious rake. However, I was glad to believe, from what I saw, that she kept them all at a safe distance, until one night I overheard a conversation between

her and Sir William in the green-room. As I stood close to the green-room door, and they talked pretty loud, I could not help overhearing what they said. Miss Everton was dressed to go home, and I heard her say:

'I must bid you good-night, Sir William.'

'No, no; don't go yet,' he said.

'I can't bear to part with you.'

'Oh, but I must,' she said; 'it's getting late.'

'So it is,' he said; 'and you are going alone.'

'Yes,' she said. 'I always go alone.'

'That's not right,' he said. 'You are too young, too beautiful; allow me to be your squire.'

She said gaily that she couldn't think of it; but he pressed her, and praised her beauty, and said he loved her to distraction, and acted the false part that he had acted many a time before. I stood in fear and trembling, and could hear my heart beat within me; for Miss Everton was not protesting now, and presently I heard her say, in a resolute way, as if she had made up her mind, 'Very well, Sir William, you shall be my squire to-night; you shall see me home.'

I have often wondered why those words should have given me such pain. I felt them like a stab in the heart. I can only suppose that I was in love, in a humble way, with Miss Everton myself.

Miss Everton and Sir William came out, and he gave her his arm, and as she passed me, she said, 'Good night' quite gaily, and her face was flushed, and her eyes sparkled as if in triumph.

I felt cold at heart, and could have cried. The poor moth!

I never had any ambition until that moment, and then I wished that I were manager, that I might say to Miss Everton—'Remain here, I wish to speak to you.' But she passed out, leaning on Sir William's arm.

What followed is no secret now.

Sir William called a cab, and they got into it together; but when they had proceeded a little way, Miss Everton called to the man to stop

at a pastrycook's shop. She got out, saying to Sir William that she was going to buy something for supper. Sir William of course offered to pay, but she would not allow him. She insisted upon buying and paying for everything herself. She bought a fowl, a shape of jelly, and a bottle of wine, and giving directions to the driver, got into the cab again.

'Oh, sha'n't we be jolly,' said Sir William.

'It will be quite a treat, won't it?' said Miss Everton.

'And with you to grace the meal.' Sir William was proceeding with a fine speech, when he noticed that the cab was going across one of the bridges.

'I thought, Miss Everton,' he said, 'you lived at St. John's Wood.'



'Yes,' she said, 'I live there with my mother; but I have a friend over the water.'

'Ah, I see,' said Sir William, delighted.

The cab turned through some narrow, dirty streets.

'Your friend, my dear Miss Everton,' said Sir William, 'does not appear to live in a very aristocratic quarter of the town.'

'No,' she said; 'but my friend has good reasons for that.'

'Oh, I see,' said Sir William.

'Well, I'll bet a wager she is not so pretty as you are.'

'Yes, Sir William, she is prettier.'

'Oh, nonsense, I won't believe that,' he said.

'Well, Sir William, you shall judge for yourself; we are there.'

The cab had stopped at a dark and narrow passage. Miss Everton paid the cabman, and told Sir William to follow her. He was too much astonished now to offer to pay for her, or to do anything but stare in wonder.

'It is very dark here,' said Miss Everton; 'but I know the way; take my hand, and I will conduct you.'

At another time Sir William would have been enraptured to take her hand, but he half hesitated now.

'What,' she said, 'are you afraid to take my hand and follow me?'

'No, no,' he said, gaily; 'but it seems so odd, you know. I could not of course imagine that you had friends here.'

Miss Everton knocked at a door at the end of the passage. It was opened by an elderly woman, who recognized her, and mentioned her by name. Miss Everton gave her a significant look, and said aloud, 'I have brought a friend; can we go up-stairs?'

The woman said 'Yes,' and held the light while Sir William and Miss Everton went up, the former wondering at the bare walls and the general poverty-stricken aspect of the place. At the top of the stairs, Miss Everton knocked at a latched door, and a man's voice said, 'Come in.'

They entered, Miss Everton still leading Sir William by the hand. It was a poorly-furnished bed-chamber, in the corner of which, on a truckle bed, lay a sick child, while an old man sat by the bedside watching her.

'I have come to see little Rose, Peter,' Miss Everton said. 'And I have brought a friend who has often inquired for her.'

And then she went up to little

Rose and kissed her, and asked her if she was better; and Rose smiled and thanked her, and said she was much better now.

'And see, Rose,' she said, 'a kind gentleman has come to see you; he has brought a chicken for you, and a jelly, and some wine; you must take some now, it will do you good.'

And she went and took the things from Sir William, and spread a cloth upon the bed, and fed Rose with her own hands. And Sir William sat in a chair gazing at her, saying never a word, and making no sign, until his eyes filled with tears, when he rose and turned away to hide them. Those were tears of grace. They made that rake and libertine a man. When her mission of love and charity was over, Miss Everton took him by the hand once more, and led him down old Peter's poor stairs and out into the dark dirty street. And there, under heaven, he fell down on his knees before her, and humbly kissed her hand, and said, 'Lady, forgive me!'

Very shortly afterwards, Miss Everton quitted the stage and became Lady William Hartley. She is a happy wife and mother now, and Sir William is a happy husband, and they have not forgotten old Peter and his crippled daughter Rose. Who knows how it might have been but for the misfortune of that poor little Christmas Fairy!

H.

CHRISTMAS AT SUNNYMEADE HALL ;

OR,

Country Cousins at Home.

THE old Christmas customs were carefully observed at Sunnymede, the beautiful country home of the Woodbine family.

There were only two unwelcome guests under its hospitable roof. Care and Anxiety (the ill-favoured pair, whose presence casts a shadow over so many domestic hearths at every Christmastide) were secretly entertained, although outwardly ignored, by each individual member of the domestic circle.

Hand in hand they made their way into the private chamber of the gentle mother of the family, who, as she mused over the cheerful fire in her own dressing-room, felt their dull, heavy presence at her heart, while with cruel fingers they drew hard lines across her aching, and hitherto unwrinkled brows.

'Dear, dear Sunnymede!' she sighed, rather than said, softly to herself—'the last Christmas, the very last;' and unaccustomed to the

weight of the burden, which she had carried in her breast for that whole day, and, indeed, for weeks previously, she gave way suddenly to a torrent of bitter tears. She was not aware that the faithful companion of the sunny hours that had made every succeeding Christmas at Sunnymead more sweet than the last, was within earshot of her heavy sobs, until a strong, gentle hand was laid upon her shoulder, and a loving but faltering voice said tenderly—

‘This must not be, Bessie; this is the only thing which I cannot bear. For better for worse, remember, my love,’ as he wiped the tears from the comely cheeks of his wife, with the gentleness of a bridegroom, and the gallantry of a highly-bred gentleman of the old-fashioned, and now, alas! well-nigh extinct school of manners.

‘There is no sting in the worst, after all,’ said Mrs. Woodbine, smiling through her tears, ‘as long as I have you and the children. But five-and-twenty Christmases we have spent here together, and we should be more than human if we had no regrets.’

‘You are right, Bessie,’ replied the Squire, gravely; ‘if it were not for the children’s sake, I would not leave it now; but you would not let me rob them, or make them pay the penalty of my own folly, Bessie? you would be the last to advise it. Ten years will be nothing to look back upon; and then, God willing, Sunnymead shall know such a Christmas gathering as it has never known before. Who knows how many sons and daughters, ay, and grandsons, and granddaughters, may not be added to our family party before that time comes?’

‘Who indeed?’ said his wife, cheerfully. ‘And now let us go down, or the girls will think that I am giving way—as the maids call it. Are my eyes very red?’ she added, looking fondly up into her husband’s face, with whom since the day when he had first brought her home, the blooming mistress of Sunnymead, she had never exchanged an angry or reproachful word.

The Squire’s reply was sealed with a kiss.

‘We are getting childish in our old age,’ observed Mrs. Woodbine; and it was indeed true, that the first real care which they had ever known, had drawn out, and thrown into strong relief, the deep, faithful attachment of years, to which it had given the glow and the freshness, and the sunshine of early youth.

The care that had come to Sunnymead, was the care of undeserved and unexpected poverty. Squire Woodbine, whose generous nature and blameless honour were above suspicion, had backed bills for a friend, to an amount which it would take ten years of the most rigid economy to save out of his yearly income; but he and his wife had determined upon such a line of conduct, in preference to that of touching their capital, or raising mortgages upon the estate, justly considering that the father’s individual imprudence should not be allowed to injure the future prospects of their children. It had thus become necessary that they should leave Sunnymead, and reduce their expenditure; and without a moment’s hesitation, Mr. and Mrs. Woodbine had resolved upon a course which involved a bitter self-sacrifice on themselves.

Care had come that Christmas to Sunnymead, but shame or disgrace would never enter its doors. ‘By living upon five hundred a year for ten years,’ said the Squire, ‘we shall save enough to pay off the debt. Frank shall never have it to say that he came into an encumbered estate, because his father could not face the consequences of his folly like a man.’

One thing, however, was unanimously determined upon, which was that the last Christmas at the home to which they were all so fondly attached, should be kept up as royally as in former years. ‘We will keep it dark until after the Twelfth-Night ball,’ said Uncle John, the poor relation, and yet, strange to say, the counsellor and oracle of the family. Take my advice, and enjoy yourselves as long as you can, and let the young ones have their Christmas fun.’

It was difficult to associate the idea of fun with the gaunt visage of Uncle John. He was a tall, thin, iron-grey man, a few years older than the Squire, with a thoughtful brow and a keen eye, and looking very unlike the poor dependent upon his relation's bounty, which in truth he was.

Uncle John was an elder brother of Mrs. Woodbine's, who had been sent abroad in his youth, to make his fortune, and who had returned to England, a Christmas or two back, a ruined but unbroken man, to find a hospitable welcome to the home of his wealthy brother-in-law, Squire Woodbine, of Sunnymede.

Christmas, therefore, was ever afterwards associated in his mind with what he called the happiest epoch of his life.

He had been before something of a cynic and a misanthrope: human nature had not presented itself to his contemplation in the most favourable light; and he expected, as he expressed himself, to have been kicked out of Sunnymede, directly it was discovered that he was not a Nabob uncle, in the possession of fabulous wealth.

With open heart and hand, however, his good as well as wealthy brother-in-law had received him; and with one accord the whole family had welcomed him to their genial and happy home; so that, with the exception of a few weeks which he spent in London, he lived there all the year round.

The Woodbine family consisted of Frank the eldest, and Benjie the youngest, the two sons of the family, the one four-and-twenty, the other but just eight; of Fanny and Magdalene, the two girls in their blushing teens, and Emily, who was a year older than Benjie, and his chosen and inseparable companion.

When Mr. and Mrs. Woodbine joined the family party, after the conversation recorded above, the domestic circle was complete; and the centre and point of attraction, as was usually the case, was the gaunt, awkward form of Uncle John.

Some interesting topic was evidently being warmly discussed, and

Fanny's voice was heard indignantly exclaiming, while she held an open letter in her hand, 'I wonder they are not ashamed to offer themselves, after their behaviour to us in town last year; I declare if I were mamma that I would write and put them off.'

'You may rely upon one thing,' said Frank, laughing, 'that they know nothing of our altered fortunes. I shall be on the list of Aunt Huntington's *detrimentals* now, and even Aggy will decline a flirtation, in direct defiance of "dearest mamma."'

'I can never like them again,' observed Magdalene, gravely, 'because of their conduct to mamma; but if they can make up their minds to come, the hospitality of Sunnymede will be a tacit reproach to them.'

'Regally said, Queen Magdalene,' said Uncle John; 'let no one impeach its hospitality this Christmas, whether friend or foe. Let them come, and you shall have your revenge, is the prediction of the "poor relation."' And he began, as was his wont when anything tickled his fancy, to sing—

'A poor relation came to beg,
In kicking him out I broke my leg,
I broke my leg,
'Tis all coral coral!'

'You don't know what we used to call you, uncle,' said Fanny, the liveliest and prettiest of his nieces; 'we thought you were rich and cross when we were all children, because you used to write mamma long letters full of advice, and never sent her any presents—we used to call you "Uncle Crabtree."'

'And we were so glad when we found that you were poor and not cross,' said Benjie, taking his uncle's large hand caressingly in his own small fist; 'because if you had been rich, you know, you would not have come to live with us.'

Uncle John, as will be perceived from this conversation, was a little fond of parading his poverty. 'No one shall say that I am looked up to for my money,' he used to observe, laughingly. 'Even Benjie will get nothing more than my old

Bible when I die, for I have sunk my annuity, and learnt the art of "spending half a crown upon sixpence a day," which I believe, after all, to be the true end of life.'

Benjie was the youngest, and the pet of the house; and if Uncle John tenderly loved the rest of the family, Benjie was the apple of his eye. The warmhearted and affectionate child had wound himself closely round his heart; and no one of the family had yet ventured to tell the little fellow that Uncle John was going away.

'Does Benjie know it?' each one had said to the other: and the reply had been invariably—'No, he does not know—nobody likes to tell him.'

'When do our trusty and well-beloved cousins make their appearance?' said Frank, rather nervously; for his cousin Claire had been his first and early love; and although her conduct to him in town had dispelled the illusion for the time, now that the old relations and associations were about to be renewed, there was a flutter of interest excited in his heart, which he would have been very unwilling to acknowledge.

It will be as well to mention here, for the edification of those readers who are not fortunate enough to see the August number of '*London Society*,' that the little episode there described, under the title of '*Country Cousins in Town*,' will explain, if referred to, why the advent of the town cousins, Claire and Agatha Huntington, was not looked forward to, with any very lively emotion of pleasure by the Woodbine family. After having partaken of their generous and warmhearted hospitalities the previous winter, at their country home, they had ignored and slighted Mrs. Woodbine and her daughters, when they went up to London in the spring; and Claire, the eldest daughter, had jilted her cousin Frank (to whom she had, during her stay at Sunnymeade, given the greatest encouragement), for the sake of the attentions of a supercilious young guardsman, who, having amused himself sufficiently at her expense, had in his turn thrown her over, with as much unconcern as

that with which he would have flung away a half-finished cigar, or bestowed a languid kick upon his favourite dog.

'We must not have the tree until Twelfth Night, when your cousins will be here,' said good-natured Mrs. Woodbine, in whose heart no unkind or revengeful feeling ever had a place. 'We are not so poor, but that we can afford some remembrance of Sunnymeade to all;' and the tears would have gathered in her eyes again, at the bitter thought of the 'last time,' if the loving eyes of the Squire had not been fixed upon her face, bent upon reading her feelings in every changing expression that flitted across it.

The preparation of the Christmas tree at Sunnymeade had ever been a costly as well as a graceful one; for it was always hung with presents of either a useful or ornamental nature, as the position of the receiver warranted; and as each member of the household, from the master and mistress to the humblest dependent, both offered and received a gift of some sort, the lighting of the tree in the large hall was a solemnity of which every one concerned in the matter felt a lively and awakening interest.

Christmas-day was spent by the family in comparative privacy, and with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain; but on the day following the expected guests arrived.

Mr. and Mrs. Huntington, and their daughters, Claire and Agatha; Sir Harry Douglas, a bachelor neighbour; Captain Alendale, a captain of dragoons, who was laying siege to the heart of Fanny Woodbine; and Lady Jane, and Lady Kitty Elfin-tower, whose acquaintance with the Woodbines had ripened into friendship since the eventful season in town, formed the party staying in the house: and everybody who knows what country-house visiting is, knows what a fund of social enjoyment and genial companionship such a party, if well selected, is capable of affording.

The Squire and his wife were in their element on such an occasion, while Uncle John, the poor relation, was a universal favourite

among young and old. Mrs. Huntington was singular in despising him: but she had an unconquerable antipathy to poverty in the abstract; and the presence of her brother's brother-in-law at Sunnymeade was always hateful in her envious sight.

'I cannot think how they can tolerate him,' she observed to her daughters, in the after-dinner conclave in her dressing-room, where they were preparing for the Twelfth Night ball; 'he is a perfect bugbear to me.'

'He is the prince of toadies, and that is the reason why they make such a fuss with him,' said Claire, spitefully. 'He flatters the girls upon their looks, and the Squire upon his hospitality, and Aunt Woodbine upon her good-nature. All toadies are more or less clairvoyants with regard to people's little weaknesses, which it is part of their game to discover, and then to play upon *ad libitum*; it is the poor relation hanger-on-of-the-family cant, and it sickens me.'

'You would find it sweeter if you had the opportunity of tasting it yourself,' said Agatha, who was fond of teasing her elder sister; 'but it is very evident that the poor relation has no great fancy for any of us. Of course the dear, good, unsophisticated girls, told him what a doubtful welcome we gave them to town in the spring.'

'He knows on which side his bread is buttered as well as most people,' was the remark of the *fine-lady* mother, who, like other fine ladies of our acquaintance, could descend to unmitigated vulgarity when her feelings were stirred or agitated more than usual; 'he fawns upon my brother's weak good-nature in a way that to me is perfectly disgusting.'

As the reader will perceive from these remarks, the skeleton in the cupboard, in the shape of threatening poverty, was not even suspected by any of the assembled guests at Sunnymeade.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodbine had determined that their Christmas festivities should be carried on that year with even greater zest than

heretofore. This determination had, indeed, originated with Uncle John, although none of the family would have recognized the fact if it had been directly alluded to: his was the quiet influence that was felt, without being brought prominently into notice, and it was from his lips that the remark had fallen, that as there was nothing disgraceful in the proposed retrenchment, it would be a 'plucky thing' to carry on the Christmas hospitalities for the last time upon their usual scale.

But the secret which had been so well kept up to the last moment—for the night in question was Twelfth Night, at the conclusion of which the worthy Squire had determined upon making known to his assembled guests the altered state of his circumstances—was doomed to be revealed to the Huntington party, through the instrumentality of little Benjie, who had followed his cousins to their room, as was his frequent custom, to see them adorn themselves for the ball. He liked to see the ornaments taken from their red velvet, or white satin nests, and clasped round the throats and arms of the pretty sisters; and when he was allowed, as he sometimes was, to be the principal performer in the operation, it was a proud and happy moment of his life.

He had been gazing with unfeigned admiration at a certain pearl cross, which his cousin Claire had been carefully attaching to some black velvet ribbon, wherewith to adorn her swan-like throat, when his attention had been suddenly arrested by the heterodox remark, quoted above, with regard to his Uncle John.

The colour mounted to his cheeks; his eyes, large, dark, and gentle by nature, grew larger, and flashed with indignation, while, clenching his fist, he stood forth the champion of the absent and the defamed.

'How dare you say that Uncle John is a toady, cousin?' he said. 'Don't you know that he has been kinder to papa and all of us, since we were ruined, than he was before. I don't quite know what a toady means, but I do know very well

that it does not mean any one that would do that.'

'Heydey, child! what say you about being ruined?' exclaimed his Aunt Huntington, her curiosity excited to the utmost. 'I always thought that my brother lived above his income, but I did not think that it had come to this.'

'Oh dear! what have I said? what have I done? I forgot that you were none of you to know it, until after supper to-night. You should not have abused Uncle John, and then I should not have let it out.'

'Uncle John will find himself in the wrong box,' said Claire Huntington, with a sneer; 'but what can be the object of keeping up these false appearances if what Benjie says is true?'

'I do not know what you mean, cousin,' replied the child: 'but I do know that you say bad things, and I don't care now about seeing you dressed for the ball.' And without further ceremony he rushed from the room, and seeking his mother in hers, he buried his curly head in her lap, and sobbed so hysterically, that she succeeded with difficulty in soothing him into sufficient composure to tell her what ailed him.

As she stooped to lay her arms fondly round him, and to press him to her warm motherly heart, a parcel which she had been examining, and which had been one of her presents from the Christmas tree, fell from her lap to the ground; the direction was as follows:—

'A remembrance of Twelfth Night at Sunnymeade, and a New Year's gift to my dear sister Elizabeth, in token of the affectionate gratitude of her brother John.'

'Don't open it until you dress for the ball,' he had said hurriedly, as he pressed it into her hand, when the parcel was detached from the tree, 'but wear it this evening for my sake.'

Mrs. Woodbine had done as he had requested, and had restrained her curiosity until the time arrived for the ball toilette, which had been deferred until the more juvenile festivities were happily over; and she had been on the point of un-

tying the string, and breaking the seals, when Benjie had surprised her by his sudden entrance, and by his burst of unrestrained grief.

As he grew more composed, his mother bethought herself of his love of untying and opening parcels—a sovereign remedy generally for his deepest sorrows—and telling him to pick up the one she had dropped, she gave him a pair of scissors to assist the operation.

With the tears still in his eyes, which now, however, sparkled behind them, Benjie bent over the pleasing task; and as paper after paper was hastily thrown aside, an old-fashioned jewel-case revealed itself to his eager gaze.

'Now what has Uncle John been thinking of in getting me jewellery,' said his sister, with a sigh; 'it is really too bad of him, out of his slender pittance too.' But when the lid of the case flew back under the influence of the pressure of Benjie's diminutive thumb, an expression of astonishment fell simultaneously from mother and son. 'Oh, mamma! how beautiful!' was the exclamation of the latter.

'What can he mean?' exclaimed the mother, whose feminine perceptions recognized at a glance the great value of the glittering gems. 'Why your uncle must have taken leave of his senses, my dear; these jewels are worth a king's ransom; and hearing her husband's step in the passage, she called him in to share in her wonder and admiration at the munificence of the poor relation's gift.

'They are very pretty,' was his remark. 'I suppose Uncle John has had them by him for some time, for the setting is very old-fashioned.'

'Pretty! old-fashioned!' said Mrs. Woodbine, aggrieved. 'Why they are priceless, and the setting is perfection. What will your sister think if I wear them to-night?' she continued, with a scarcely perceptible smile of triumph, which she would have been more than femininely human not to have experienced. 'Lady Elftower herself has not finer diamonds than these; why the price of them would pay our debt, dear,' she added, as

her cheeks flushed crimson with excitement at the bare thought. 'Uncle John knows it, and has given them to me in his own delicate way for that purpose. Please God, we shall not have to leave Sunnymede after all.'

'Sixty thousand pounds for those gimcracks, my dear Bessie! you must be raving,' said the Squire, in alarm, for he thought that his good wife, in the exuberance of her gratitude, had taken leave of her senses.

'Gimcracks as you call them, they are worth more than that,' she said, taking the necklace reverentially from its place, where it lay surrounded by its bright compeers. I will wear them to-night, as he wishes, but afterwards, with John's leave, they must be disposed of to pay the debt.'

'We will talk about that afterwards, my love, for I cannot believe that the jewels are worth the money; it would not have been like Uncle John to pass himself off as a poor relation, whilst holding such a mine of wealth in his hands.'

'What is that you say?' interrupted a well-known voice at the door. 'I came in search of Benjie, and did not, I must own, expect to hear myself abused in full family conclave. A man who has spent half his life in the East, might be supposed to have come by a crystal or so honestly, eh, Bessie? These, to tell you the truth, I intended to keep for Frank's wife, but I had a fancy to see you in them to-night. Let our sun go down in glory, as it will rise again ten years hence.'

With these words Uncle John disappeared, and his sister said, with a sigh, 'That hint about Frank's wife, was his way of saying that he did not wish me to part with them. It *would* be a sin too,' she added; and perhaps with pardonable motherly pride, her imagination became radiant with a vision of a fair young bride, round whose throat she would clasp the priceless necklace on her wedding morn, while wondering bridesmaids looked on, dazzled and amazed.

'You must wear your black velvet to-night, with these, mother,' said Benjie, who was well up in the

mysteries of the toilette, and who had a natural delight in the contemplation of beautiful and sumptuous things.

'You are right, dear child,' said his mother, kissing him. 'Your sisters must not see me until I am dressed; how surprised they will be when I appear in this blaze of light!'

THE BALL.

The mansion of Sunnymede was an old-fashioned one, but it was large and very commodious. The saloon was well adapted for a ball-room, and the Christmas festivities generally concluded with a dance, to which all the neighbourhood was invited; and it was for this event that the inmates of the house were preparing, on the evening described in the last chapter.

It was the Squire's intention when the guests and the family were assembled at supper—when, according to the old-fashioned custom, healths were proposed and speeches made—to make a speech informing his friends and neighbours of his altered circumstances, and to take an affectionate farewell of them before leaving the county for so many years.

The good Squire was fond of making a speech, when he felt himself surrounded by friends and genial well-wishers; and he knew by intuition with what warm and genuine sympathy his announcement and farewell would be received.

It was a sort of innocent sensation scene which he had pictured to himself, and from which his genial, ingenuous nature, derived some sort of consolation.

Everything was ready, and the musicians were tuning their instruments for the first dance. The young ladies of the family were standing in a group round the fireplace, awaiting the welcome sound of the grind of the first carriage-wheels upon the gravel road.

They formed a very pretty group, the two sisters, and their equally pretty though less unsophisticated cousins; and as they advanced gracefully to receive their guests, even Mrs. Huntington smiled approbation.

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CHRISTMAS AT SUNNYMEADE HALL; OR, COUNTRY COUSINS AT HOME.

Drawn by C. W. Cope, R.A.

[See the Story.]

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Magdalene to her sister, anxiously. 'I hope she has not broken down at the last moment.' But as she spoke the words Mrs. Woodbine entered the room, looking wonderfully handsome.

She was as nervous as a girl, about entering the room alone, so conscious was she of the sensation which her brilliant appearance would be sure to create, especially among the feminine part of the community; and meeting with Uncle John in the hall, she linked her arm in his, and thus amply protected, made her public entry into the saloon. 'You are beautiful to-night, Bessie,' said the Squire, as he proudly surveyed his wife; and 'Good gracious! what has mamma got on?' was the simultaneous exclamation of her two daughters, as they watched their mother's entrance.

But if their amazement was great, it was as nothing compared to that with which their aunt Huntington and their two cousins gazed upon the regal *parure* in which simple Mrs. Woodbine was decked that night. 'Where can they come from? whose can they be?' they asked of one another, without receiving any satisfactory reply. 'Can Lady Elftower have possibly lent her her diamonds for the night? What a ridiculous display of borrowed finery if she has! Dressed like a duchess, and hanging on the arm of the arch toady still,' were the remarks which were bandied from one to another; and so engrossed were the whole party in the surmises and suggestions to which Mrs. Woodbine's splendour had given rise, that they did not perceive their cousin Frank, who had joined them, and was waiting for a moment's silence, to enable him to engage his cousin Claire for the first dance. Perceiving, however, that their ill-natured and invidious remarks had for their object his mother and his Uncle John, he was justly angered, and turning quickly upon his heel, with his handsome face in a glow of righteous indignation, he muttered to himself, 'She is not worth it; I will not sacrifice my own pleasure for

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hers;' and perceiving the youthful and unaffectedly graceful Lady Kitty enter the ball-room at that moment with her sister, it would not have appeared to the closest observer that he made any sacrifice of his own inclination in engaging her hand for the first quadrille.

The Squire was anxious that every one should dance; and while those couples were arranging their places, who had required no coercion or persuasion in the cause, he was enlisting the whole band of wall-flowers for a quiet quadrille, providing them with partners with a happy recklessness and dash which none but the Squire himself could have so successfully assumed.

In a few moments every one was standing up, and himself and his wife were the only couple unprovided with a *vis-à-vis*. 'Mamma is in the library,' whispered Agatha to her uncle: 'you must make her dance to-night.'

'So she shall, by Jove!' was the reply. 'She must dance with Uncle John, he is a defaulter as well; and signing to the musicians to wait for his return, he sought his sister and his brother-in-law, as a *vis-à-vis* for himself and his partner. 'I will not be contradicted to-night of all nights in the world, Dolly,' he said, to the intense disgust of his fine-lady sister, who had been christened Dorothy after a maiden aunt in the family, from whom expectations had been entertained. 'You must stand up with Uncle John; we are not in May-fair now you know,' he added, mischievously, 'and at Rome, as the saying is, we must do as the Romans do.'

If a glance could have slain, the career of poor Uncle John would have come at that moment to an untimely end.

Mrs. Huntington, making him a mock courtesy of exaggerated deference, and scarcely deigning to rest the tips of her fingers on his offered arm, suffered herself to be led by him into the circle of dancers, where they took their places opposite to the Squire, and the brilliant apparition at his side.

His first remark was one ill calculated to pour oil upon the troubled

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waters, in the breast of the injured lady. 'How handsome Bessie looks to-night,' he observed; 'she looks as young as Magdalene now.'

As Mrs. Huntington had been jealous of the beauty of her brother's wife, from the first day that he paid court to her, a handsome, happy girl at a county ball, it was not likely that the amiable feeling would decrease in intensity with advancing years. A sullen 'humph' was all the reply she deigned to the assertion; but after a moment's pause, unable to conceal the rancour which the sight of the diamonds had called up in her breast, she said, 'What folly all this is, if what rumour says is true. If my brother is as nearly ruined as people say, all these livery servants may be bailiffs in disguise, for all one knows to the contrary.'

'Your informants, whoever they are'—how little Uncle John suspected his darling Benjie of the delinquency!—'have evidently failed to tell you that dishonour and your brother's name are not likely to be mentioned in the same breath. His ruin, as you are pleased to call it, is the result of an over-generous and trustful nature, and he is prepared to face it like a man.'

'It is true, then,' said Mrs. Huntington, with a gasp of anxiety; and she congratulated herself inwardly on the escape which Claire had had in rejecting the attentions of her eldest cousin the previous season in town.

'I am not at liberty to say how far it is true, and how far it is false,' replied Uncle John, coldly; 'but if it is true, my sister and her children will require all the consolation which *real friends* can afford. How far can we rely upon you, Mrs. Huntington, for taking them in for a short time, when they leave Sunnymede?'

'Indeed,' was the cold reply. 'I fear I can do nothing in the matter; as people make their beds they must lie on them. If my brother has been such a fool as to waste his substance upon idle dependents, it is no business of mine.'

Uncle John's grey eye flashed fire at this remark, but he kept his own counsel, and the quadrille being hap-

pily over he showed great alacrity in conducting his partner to her seat.

Magdalene had been dancing with Sir Harry Douglas, and her bright young face was more beautiful than usual, as she turned to make a smiling remark upon the unusual event of Uncle John's dancing.

'I wish every one to be happy to-night,' was his earnest rejoinder: 'every one *shall* be happy to-night, indeed, as far as I am concerned.'

'Why should not I be included in your uncle's sentence?' said Magdalene's partner, as he skilfully tried to evade the vacant seat by Mrs. Woodbine, and to lead off his charge on a vague excursion into byways and anterooms in the nominal pursuit of tea.

'Wait, please, wait till after supper,' said Magdalene, nervously, and evidently in allusion to some previous conversation; and withdrawing her hand a little abruptly from his arm she took the nearest place, leaving Sir Harry perhaps more amazed than he had ever been in his life, at hearing himself requested by the most modest and retiring young lady of his acquaintance, to defer the momentous question, which would affect the happiness of his future life, until 'after supper.'

Frank, in the mean time, had so far improved his acquaintance with Lady Kitty, that, ardent and susceptible as he was, he would doubtless have proposed to her there and then, if the vision of the after-supper revelation had not also restrained him.

Claire Huntington, mortified and annoyed at the little estimation in which she was comparatively held, determined upon a petty revenge, by carrying on a flirtation with Captain Alendale, between whom and Fanny Woodbine she fancied that there existed a growing attachment.

'What a charming family they are!' had been the remark of that young officer, in accents that seemed to come low and muffled through his heavy moustache, while his eyes followed, as he spoke, the graceful motions of the fair Fanny among the revolving crowd before them.

'Charming!' was the insidious reply. 'How sad it is, though, poor

things, to think of keeping such a show to the last'—for Mrs. Huntington had whispered to her daughter that Benjie's testimony had been confirmed by the poor relation, and that the Woodbines were going to leave Sunnymeade for good. 'I suppose you have heard that they are going to leave this place owing to the embarrassed state of my uncle's affairs?'

'You don't say so,' was the quick reply. 'I imagined that both the Miss Woodbines had large fortunes of their own, and that Frank was heir to ten thousand a year at least.'

'Oh! dear me, no. You have been quite deceived. But I am sorry that I have let out that Fan has not the snug little fortune of twenty thousand pounds, which wicked worldly men like yourself would think a *very great* attraction, in addition to her own *beaux yeux*.'

Whether Fanny Woodbine would have been obliged to her or not, for taking the gallant captain off her hands, I am not now at liberty to say, but certain it was that he did not approach her with his usual eagerness, but stood in the doorway twirling his moustache, with as near an expression of thought upon his countenance as it was capable of wearing. There was a good deal of repetition in the language of his reflections, which can be expressed in a few words, although they wrung the brain of the warrior, with the anguish attending the strain of unwonted and original thought. 'By Jove, though, it was a near thing, a very near thing. By Jove! I have had an escape. A nice girl, too, but no money. By Jove! what a sell.'

So in that little community there were many contending emotions at work, on which the intended disclosure of the night would be brought strongly to bear; and as the time drew near in which it was to be made, the Squire grew nervous and agitated, and his wife felt the beating of an anxious heart, under the weight of the jewels which had been the wonder and admiration of the room.

'They are very fine, I believe,' said the Squire to Lady Kitty Elfin-tower as he led her into supper; 'they were intended for Frank's

wife, according to Uncle John, but he wished Mrs. Woodbine to wear them to-night.'

The colour rose rather warmly to the cheek of his companion as he casually mentioned the words, 'Frank's wife;' and Claire Huntington, who was close behind them with her cavalier, Captain Alendale, gave a start of anything but gratified surprise.

The ball-supper on Twelfth Night at Sunnymeade was always a sort of state affair, at which every guest was seated in comfort; and the engagements, therefore, for the supper-dance, were always arranged with due regard to the importance of the occasion. This night, in particular, the members of the family had been anxious to secure a companion of whose friendly sympathy they could feel well assured; and, judging from outward appearances, they were each well supported on the trying occasion. The Squire and his wife sat side by side, according to the custom observed at Sunnymeade from time immemorial; Magdalene had on her right hand Sir Harry Douglas, and on her left her sister Fanny, who had seen with amused surprise the formerly devoted captain pass her by and enlist her cousin Claire with much apparent solicitude for the supper-dance. The rector's son, Ralph Hartopp, whom the more officious attentions of his soldier rival had kept at bay, had anxiously secured her for his partner, and the best news that could have greeted his ears would have been that she was poor and portionless, and that it remained for him to make a name and a fortune worthy of her gracious acceptance. This, you will observe, was selfishness also, but it took a more noble form than that of the man whom he believed to be his rival. Ralph was a talented youth, of a generous and ardent nature; and he had only made the discovery of a deep attachment for the lovely Fanny, with the advent of Captain Alendale at Sunnymeade. Benjie and Emily were at Uncle John's left hand, who presided at the other end of the richly-appointed supper-table, with Mrs. Huntington, his unwilling partner, at his right.

Benjie's eager gaze was fixed upon his uncle's face, as his father began his farewell speech in the simple language of his own good heart. When the Squire rose to return thanks for the generous enthusiasm with which his own and his wife's health had been received, a deep silence prevailed in the room, and the clear accents of his ringing voice, mellowed but not impaired by time, went to the hearts of his hearers in the following words:—

'I have to thank you most cordially, my good friends and neighbours, for the warm and affectionate manner with which the last toast has been received. The occasion, I assure you, is one on which any expression of sympathy comes very straight home to all of us. We have need, I do assure you, of all that you have to give us. My very good friends and neighbours: contrary to my usual custom (which is, as you know, to keep the young people away from the ball-room for as short a time as possible), I am going to intrude for a little time upon your patience; but you will excuse me, I know, for I only ask for time to bid you all, in the names of my family and myself, most cordially farewell; and to tell you how it has happened that I find myself an impoverished, if not a ruined man, at the very height of my seeming prosperity. Experience, they say, makes us all wise, but some of us purchase it more dearly than others. I have been fool enough to stand surety for a friend, but I am not knave enough to rob my children of their birthright, or to make them suffer the consequences of their father's folly. They have agreed to help me in the plan to which their dear mother has also nobly agreed: we are going away for ten years—away from Sunnymeade, and from the good friends and neighbours whom we have lived happily amongst for so long. I could not speak of it so calmly, or face it so bravely, if I had not been supported by the feeling of *right* in the matter. I have been a fool in the eyes of the world, I know, but in the eyes of God, and of those friends who have it in them to rally round a fallen house, I can truly say

that I have been nothing more. I have "come to grief," my friends, as the saying is, but I can bear it, and am authorized to say, in all our names, that we can *all* bear it, if you will let us have once again before we go, the ringing cheer which has so often re-echoed at this season under the roof of our dear old home; if you will drink, with three times three, the toast of "Our happy return."

The secret was out, the fact was made known, and many a face had grown pale, and many an eye had drooped, as the voice of the Squire had more than once faltered, and had fairly broken down in his old attempt at fun, when he said, I have 'come to grief.'

But there was one among that assemblage whose eye grew brighter and whose bearing prouder, as each word fell from his brother-in-law's lips; and that eye, and that bearing belonged to none other than the poor relation, to whom the place of honour had been given at hospitable Sunnymeade. As the echoes of the last cheer died away, and as Mrs. Woodbine and her daughters, Fanny and Magdalene, strove hard to keep down the rebellious choking in their throats, and as Benjie and Emily sobbed aloud, he rose from his chair, and in clear, strong accents made the following speech to the assembled guests:—

'Ladies and gentlemen: if there is one more worthy of your honour and respect than another in this room, it is the man who sits at the head of this table, whom I am proud to call brother, and who is a thousand times dearer to us all in this, his moment of adversity, than when he sat amongst us prosperous and prospering, the open-handed, large-hearted Squire of Sunnymeade Hall. He has made his claim upon your patience, to tell you simply and shortly of his broken and altered fortunes; let me bespeak the same patience for a few minutes whilst I tell you a plain unvarnished tale, in which, I think, I can promise that you will all be interested. My good friends: there arrived in England, two years ago this Christmas, a man broken in health, with ruined prospects and

soured temper, a very unfavourable specimen of that unfavoured class, coming under the head of "poor relations." To make matters worse, he was a cynic at heart, to whom the world, with the careless *bonhomie* which distinguishes it, had administered, in its devil-may-care, easy sort of way, more kicks than halfpence. But strange to say, ladies and gentlemen, this man, with all his faults upon his head, was just the sort of man that Squire Woodbine (with the harmless eccentricity which characterizes him) found out that he liked. He has just now told us that he will be considered a fool in the eyes of the world, and we all believed him: he is the sort of man to "come to grief;" he is the sort of man to be considered a fool; he is the sort of man whose princely generosity and noble nature are a riddle to read, to which the world can give but one solution, and that is that "the man is a lunatic." But is it not also true, my friends, that this is the very sort of man whom we can least afford to lose from amongst us? This poor-relation-befriending, simple-minded,

noble-natured member of our society must not for very shame be allowed to "come to grief."

'Ladies and gentlemen: I have one more toast to propose; it is an eccentric one, but poor relations and dependents become unlike other people; let us drink to the health of the "poor relation," to the health "of the reformed cynic," "of the ruined stranger," who chose this underhand manner of becoming acquainted with you all, and who is not likely to let Squire Woodbine and his family depart from Sunny-mead when it lies in his power to show his gratitude more substantially than in words, and when he has a balance standing over at his bankers to the amount of half a million of money. It was a field lying fallow, in which the good deeds and the kind words of noble natures have been sown for the last two years. That they may spring up and bear fruit abundantly, is the prayer of the "poor relation," in whose behalf I have bespoken your kindness and your forbearance this night.'

CHRISTMAS WITH THE BARON:

A RATHER REMARKABLE FAIRY TALE.

ONCE upon a time—fairy tales always begin with once upon a time, you know—once upon a time there lived in a fine old castle on the Rhine, a certain Baron von Schreckslofsleschshoffinger. You won't find it an easy name to pronounce; in fact, the Baron never tried it himself but once, and then he was laid up for two days afterwards; so in future we'll merely call him 'The Baron,' for shortness, particularly as he was rather a dumpy man. After having heard his name, you won't be surprised when I tell you that he was an exceedingly bad character. For a German baron, he was considered enormously rich; a hundred and fifty pounds a year wouldn't be thought much over here; but still it will buy a good deal of sausage, which,

with wine grown on the estate, formed the chief sustenance of the Baron and his family. Now you'll hardly believe that, notwithstanding he was the possessor of this princely revenue, the Baron was not satisfied but, oppressed and ground down his unfortunate tenants to the very last penny he could possibly squeeze out of them. In all his exactions he was seconded and encouraged by his steward, Klootz, an old rascal who took a malicious pleasure in his master's cruelty, and who chuckled and rubbed his hands with the greatest apparent enjoyment when any of the poor landholders couldn't pay their rent, or afforded him any opportunity for oppression. Not content with making the poor tenants pay double value for the land they

rented, the Baron was in the habit of going round every now and then to their houses, and ordering anything he took a fancy to, from a fat pig to a pretty daughter, to be sent up to the castle. The pretty daughter was made parlour-maid, but as she had nothing a year, and to find herself, it wasn't what would be considered by careful mothers an eligible situation. The fat pig became sausage, of course. Things went on from bad to worse, till at the time of our story, between the alternate squeezings of the Baron and his steward, the poor tenants had very little left to squeeze out of them. The fat pigs and the pretty daughters had nearly all found their way up to the castle, and there was little else to take. The only help the poor fellows had, was the Baron's only daughter, Lady Bertha, who always had a kind word, and frequently something more substantial, for them, when her father was not in the way. Now I'm not going to describe Bertha, for the simple reason that if I did, you would imagine that she was the fairy I'm going to tell you about, and she isn't. However, I don't mind giving you a few outlines. In the first place, she was exceedingly tiny—the nicest girls, the real loveable little pets, always are tiny—and she had long silken black hair, and a dear, dimpled little face, full of love and mischief. Now then, fill up the outline with the details of the nicest and prettiest girl you know, and you'll have a slight idea of her. On second thoughts, I don't believe you will, for your portrait wouldn't be half good enough; however, it'll be near enough for you. Well, the Baron's daughter being all your fancy painted her, and a trifle more, was naturally much distressed at the goings on of her unamiable parent, and tried her best to make amends for her father's harshness. She generally managed that a good many pounds of the sausage should find their way back to the owners of the original pig; and when the Baron tried to squeeze the hand of the pretty parlour-maid, which he occasionally did after dinner, Bertha had only to say, in a

tone of mild remonstrance, 'Pa!' and pa dropped the hand like a hot potato, and stared very hard the other way, instantly. Bad as the disreputable old Baron was, he had a respect for the goodness and purity of his child. Like the lion, tamed by the charm of Una's innocence, the rough old rascal seemed to lose in her presence half his rudeness; and though he used awful language to her sometimes (I dare say even Una's lion roared occasionally) he was more tractable with her than with any other living being. Her presence operated as a moral restraint upon him, which possibly was the reason that he never stayed down stairs after dinner, but always retired to a favourite turret, where he could get comfortably tipsy, which, I regret to say, he had got so in the way of doing every afternoon, that I believe he would have felt unwell without.

The hour of the Baron's afternoon symposium was the time selected by Bertha for her errands of charity. Once he was fairly settled down to his second bottle, off went Bertha, with her maid beside her carrying a basket to bestow a meal on some of the poor tenants, among whom she was always received with blessings. At first these excursions had been undertaken solely from charitable motives, and Bertha thought herself plentifully repaid in the love and thanks of her grateful pensioners. Of late, however, another cause had led her to take even stronger interest in her walks, and occasionally to come in with brighter eyes and a rosier cheek than the gratitude of the poor tenants had been wont to produce. The fact is, some months before the time of our story, Bertha had noticed in her walks a young artist, who seemed to be fated to be invariably sketching points of interest in the road she had to take. There was one particular tree, exactly in the path which led from the castle gate, which he had sketched from at least four points of view, and Bertha began to wonder what there could be so very particular about it. At last, just as Carl von Sempach had begun to consider where on earth

he could sketch the tree from next, and to ponder seriously upon the feasibility of climbing up into it, and taking it from *that* point of view, a trifling accident occurred which gave him the opportunity of making Bertha's acquaintance, which, I don't mind stating confidentially, was the very thing he had been waiting for. It so chanced, that on one particular afternoon the maid, either through awkwardness, or possibly through looking more at the handsome painter than the ground she was walking on, stumbled and fell. Of course the basket fell too, and equally of course, Carl, as a gentleman, couldn't do less than offer his assistance in picking up the damsel and the dinner.

The acquaintance thus commenced was not suffered to drop; and handsome Carl and our good little Bertha were fairly over head and ears in love, and had begun to have serious thoughts of a cottage in a wood, *et cætera*, when their felicity was disturbed by their being accidentally met, in one of their walks, by the Baron. Of course the Baron, being himself so thorough an aristocrat, had higher views for his daughter than marrying her to a 'beggarly artist,' and accordingly he stamped and swore, and threatened Carl with summary punishment with all sorts of weapons, from heavy boots to blunderbusses, if ever he ventured near the premises again. This was unpleasant; but I fear it didn't *quite* put a stop to the young people's interviews, though it made them less frequent and more secret than before.

Now I'm quite aware this wasn't at all proper, and that no properly-regulated young lady would ever have had meetings with a young man her papa didn't approve of. But then it's just possible Bertha mightn't have been a properly-regulated young lady; I only know she was a dear little pet, worth twenty model young ladies, and that she loved Carl very dearly. And then consider what a dreadful old tyrant of a papa she had! My dear girl, it's not the slightest use your looking so provokingly correct; it's my deliberate belief that if you had

been in her shoes (they'd have been at least three sizes too small for you; but that doesn't matter) you would have done precisely the same.

Such was the state of things on Christmas Eve in the year — — — stay! fairy tales never have a year to them; so on second thoughts I wouldn't tell the date if I knew—but I don't. Such was the state of things, however, on the particular 24th of December to which our story refers—only, if anything, rather more so. The Baron had got up in the morning in an exceedingly bad temper; and those about him had felt its effects all through the day. His two favourite wolf-hounds, Lutzow and Teufel, had received so many kicks from the Baron's heavy boots that they hardly knew at which end their tails were; and even Klootz himself scarcely dared to approach his master. In the middle of the day two of the principal tenants came to say that they were unprepared with their rent, and to beg for a little delay. The poor fellows represented that their families were starving, and entreated for mercy; but the Baron was only too glad that he had at last found so fair an excuse for venting his ill-humour. He loaded the unhappy defaulters with every abusive epithet he could devise (and being called names in German is no joke, I can tell you); and, lastly, he swore by everything he could think of that if their rent was not paid on the morrow, themselves and their families should be turned out of doors to sleep on the 'snow, which was then many inches deep on the ground. They still continued to beg for mercy, till the Baron became so exasperated that he determined to kick them out of the castle himself. He pursued them for that purpose as far as the outer door, when fresh fuel was added to his anger. Carl, who, as I have hinted, still managed, notwithstanding the paternal prohibition, to see fair Bertha occasionally, and had come to wish her a merry Christmas, chanced at this identical moment to be saying good-bye at the door, above which, in accordance with immemorial usage, a huge bush of mistletoe was sus-

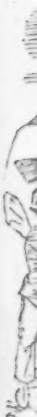
pended. What they were doing under it at the moment of the Baron's appearance, I never knew exactly; but his wrath was tremendous! I regret to say that his language was unparliamentary in the extreme. He swore till he was mauve in the face; and if he had not providentially been seized with a fit of coughing, and sat down in the coal-scuttle—mistaking it for a three-legged stool—it is impossible to say to what lengths his feelings might have carried him. Carl and Bertha picked him up, rather black behind, but otherwise not much the worse for his accident. In fact, the diversion of his thoughts seemed to have done him good; for, having sworn a little more, and Carl having left the castle, he appeared rather better. After having endured so many and various emotions, it is hardly to be wondered at that the Baron required some consolation; so, after having changed his trousers, he took himself off to his favourite turret, to allay by copious potations the irritation of his mind. Bottle after bottle was emptied, and pipe after pipe was filled and smoked. The fine old Burgundy was gradually getting into the Baron's head; and altogether he was beginning to feel more comfortable. The shades of the winter afternoon had deepened into the evening twilight, made dimmer still by the aromatic clouds that came, with dignified deliberation, from the Baron's lips, and curled and floated up to the carved ceiling of the turret, where they spread themselves into a dim canopy, which every successive cloud brought lower and lower. The fire, which had been piled up mountain-high earlier in the afternoon, and had flamed and roared to its heart's content ever since, had now got to that state—the perfection of a fire to a lazy man—when it requires no poking or attention of any kind, but just burns itself hollow, and then tumbles in, and blazes jovially for a little time, and then settles down to a genial glow, and gets hollow and tumbles in again. The Baron's fire was just in this delightful 'da capo' condition, most favourable of all to the enjoyment of the 'dolce far

niente.' For a little while it would glow and kindle quietly, making strange faces to itself, and building fantastic castles in the depths of its red recesses, and then the castles would come down with a crash, and the faces disappear, and a bright flame spring up and lick lovingly the sides of the old chimney; and the carved heads of improbable men and impossible women, hewn so deftly round the panels of the old oak wardrobe opposite, in which the Baron's choicest vintages were deposited, were lit up by the flickering light, and seemed to nod and wink at the fire in return, with the familiarity of old acquaintances.

Some such fancy as this was disporting itself in the Baron's brain; and he was gazing at the old oak carving accordingly, and emitting huge volumes of smoke with reflective slowness, when a clatter among the bottles on the table caused him to turn his head to ascertain the cause. The Baron was by no means a nervous man; however, the sight that met his eyes when he turned round, did take away his presence of mind a little; and he was obliged to take four distinct puffs before he had sufficiently regained his equilibrium to inquire, 'Who the—Pickwick—are you?' (The Baron said 'Dickens,' but as that is a naughty word we will substitute 'Pickwick,' which is equally expressive, and not so wrong.) Let me see; where was I? Oh, yes. 'Who the Pickwick are you?'

Now, before I allow the Baron's visitor to answer the question, perhaps I had better give a slight description of his personal appearance. If this wasn't a true story, I should have liked to have made him a model of manly beauty; but a regard for veracity compels me to confess that he was not what would be generally considered handsome; that is, not in figure, for his face was by no means unpleasing. His body was in size and shape not very unlike a huge plum-pudding, and was clothed in a bright-green tightly-fitting doublet with red holly berries for buttons. His limbs were long and slender in proportion to his stature, which was not more than three feet or so. His head

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was encircled by a crown of holly and mistletoe. The round red berries sparkled amid his hair, which was silver-white, and shone out in cheerful harmony with his rosy jovial face. And that face! it

would have done one good to look at it. In spite of the silver hair, and an occasional wrinkle beneath the merry laughing eyes, it seemed brimming over with perpetual youth. The mouth, well garnished with



teeth, white and sound, which seemed as if they could do ample justice to holiday cheer, was ever open with a beaming genial smile, expanding now and then into hearty jovial laughter. Fun and good-fellowship were in every feature. The owner of the face was, at the moment when the Baron first perceived him, comfortably seated upon the top of the large tobacco-jar on the table, nursing his left leg. The Baron's somewhat abrupt inquiry did not appear to irritate him; on the contrary, he seemed rather amused than otherwise.

'You don't ask prettily, old gentleman,' he replied; 'but I don't mind telling you, for all that. I'm King Christmas.'

'Eh?' said the Baron.

'Ah!' said the goblin. Of course you've guessed he was a goblin.

'And pray what's your business here?' said the Baron.

'Don't be crusty with a fellow,' replied the goblin. 'I merely looked in to wish you the compliments of the season. Talking of crust, by the way, what sort of a tap is it you're drinking?' So saying, he took up a flask of the Baron's very best and poured out about half a glass. Having held the glass first to one side and then the other, winked at it twice, sniffed it, and gone through the remainder of the pantomime in which connoisseurs indulge, he drank it with great deliberation, and smacked his lips

scientifically. 'Hum! Johannisberg! and not so very bad—for you. But I tell you what it is, Baron, you'll have to bring out better stuff than this when I put my legs on your mahogany.'

'Well, you are a cool fish,' said the Baron. 'However, you're rather a joke, so now you're here we may as well enjoy ourselves. Smoke?'

'Not anything you're likely to offer me!'

'Confound your impudence!' roared the Baron, with a horribly complicated oath. 'That tobacco's as good as any in all Rhineland.'

'That's a nasty cough you've got, Baron. Don't excite yourself, my dear boy; I dare say you speak according to your lights. I don't mean Vesuvians, you know, but your opportunities for knowing anything about it. Try a weed out of my case, and I expect you'll alter your opinion.'

The Baron took the proffered case, and selected a cigar. Not a word was spoken till it was half consumed, when the Baron took it for the first time from his lips, and said gently, with the air of a man communicating an important discovery in the strictest confidence, 'Das ist gut!'

'Thought you'd say so,' said the visitor. 'And now, as you like the cigar, I should like you to try a thimbleful of what I call wine. I must warn you, though, that it is rather potent, and may produce effects you are not accustomed to.'

'Bother that, if it's as good as the weed,' said the Baron; 'I haven't taken my usual quantity by four bottles yet.'

'Well, don't say I didn't warn you, that's all. I don't think you'll find it unpleasant, though it is rather strong when you're not accustomed to it.' So saying, the goblin produced from some mysterious pocket a black big-bellied bottle, crusted apparently with the dust of ages. It did strike the Baron as peculiar, that the bottle, when once produced, appeared nearly as big round as the goblin himself; but he was not the sort of man to stick at trifles, and he pushed forward his glass to be filled just as

composedly as if the potion had been shipped by Sandeman, and paid duty in the most commonplace way.

The glass was filled and emptied, but the Baron uttered not his opinion. Not in words, at least, but he pushed forward his glass to be filled again in a manner that sufficiently bespoke his approval.

'Aha, you smile!' said the goblin. And it was a positive fact; the Baron was smiling; a thing he hadn't been known to do in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. 'That's the stuff to make your hair curl, isn't it?'

'I believe you, my b-o-o-y!' The Baron brought out this earnest expression of implicit confidence with true Paul Bedford unction. 'It warms one—here!'

Knowing the character of the man, one would have expected him to put his hand upon his stomach. But he didn't; he laid it upon his heart.

'The spell begins to operate, I see,' said the goblin. 'Have another glass.'

The Baron had another glass, and another after that. The smile on his face expanded into an expression of such geniality that the whole character of his countenance was changed, and his own mother wouldn't have known him. I doubt myself—inasmuch as she died when he was exactly a year and three months old—whether she would have recognized him under any circumstances; but I merely wish to express that he was changed almost beyond recognition.

'Upon my word,' said the Baron, at length, 'I feel so light I almost think I could dance a hornpipe. I used to once, I know. Shall I try?'

'Well, if you ask my advice,' replied the goblin, 'I should say, decidedly don't. "Barkis is willing," I dare say, but trousers are weak, and you might split 'em.'

'Hang it all,' said the Baron, 'so I might; I didn't think of that. But still I feel as if I must do something juvenile!'

'Ah! that's the effect of your change of nature,' said the goblin. 'Never mind, I'll give you plenty to do, presently.'

'Change of nature! what do you mean, you old conundrum?' said the Baron.

'You're another,' said the goblin. 'But never mind. What I mean is just this. What you are now feeling is the natural consequence of my magic wine, which has changed you into a fairy. That's what's the matter, sir.'

'A fairy! me!' exclaimed the Baron. 'Get out; I'm too fat.'

'Fat! oh, that's nothing. We shall put you in regular training, and you'll soon be slim enough to creep into a lady's stocking. Not that you'll be called upon to do anything of the sort; but I'm merely giving you an idea of your future figure.'

'No, no,' said the Baron; 'me thin! that's too ridiculous. Why, that's worse than being a fairy. You don't mean it, though, do you? I do feel rather peculiar.'

'I do, indeed,' said the visitor. 'You don't dislike it, do you?'

'Well, no, I can't say I do, entirely. It's queer, though, I feel so uncommon friendly. I feel as if I should like to shake hands, or pat somebody on the back.'

'Ah!' said the goblin, 'I know how it is. Rum feeling, when you're not accustomed to it. But come; finish that glass, for we must be off. We've got a precious deal to do before morning, I can tell you. Are you ready?'

'All right,' said the Baron. 'I'm just in the humour to make a night of it.'

'Come along, then,' said the goblin.

They proceeded for a short time in silence along the corridors of the old castle. They carried no candle, but the Baron noticed that everything seemed perfectly light wherever they stood, but relapsed into darkness as soon as they had passed by. The goblin spoke first.

'I say, Baron, you've been an uncommon old brute in your time, now, haven't you?'

'H'm,' said the Baron, reflectively, 'I don't know. Well, yes, I rather think I have.'

'How jolly miserable you've been making those two young people,

you old sinner! You know who I mean.'

'Eh, what? You know that, too?' said the Baron.

'Know it; of course I do. Why, bless your heart, I know everything, my dear boy. But you *have* made yourself an old pig in that quarter, considerably. Arn't you blushing, you hardhearted old monster?'

'Don't know, I'm sure,' said the Baron, scratching his nose, as if that was where he expected to feel it. I believe I have treated them badly, though, now I come to think of it.'

At this moment they reached the door of Bertha's chamber. The door opened of itself at their approach.

'Come along,' said the goblin, 'you won't wake her. Now, old flinty-heart, look there.'

The sight that met the Baron's view was one that few fathers could have beheld without affectionate emotion. Under ordinary circumstances, however, the Baron would not have felt at all sentimental on the subject, but to-night something made him view things in quite a different light to that he was accustomed to. I shouldn't like to make affidavit of the fact, but it's my positive impression that he sighed.

Now, my dear reader—particularly if a gentleman—don't imagine I'm going to indulge your impertinent curiosity with an elaborate description of the sacred details of a lady's sleeping apartment. *You're* not a fairy, you know, and I don't see that it can possibly matter to you whether fair Bertha's dainty little bottines were tidily placed on the chair by her bedside, or thrown carelessly, as they had been taken off, upon the hearth-rug, where her favourite spaniel reposed, warming his nose in his sleep before the last smouldering embers of the decaying fire; or whether her crinoline—but if she did wear a crinoline, what can that possibly matter, sir, to you? All I shall tell you is, that everything looked snug and comfortable; but somehow, any place got that look when Bertha was in it. And now a word about the jewel in the casket—pet Bertha herself. Really, I'm at a loss to describe her. How do you look when you're asleep?—

Well, it wasn't like *that*; not a bit! Fancy a sweet girl face, the cheek faintly flushed with a soft warm tint, like the blush in the heart of the opening rose, and made brighter by the contrast of the snowy pillow on which it rested; dark silken hair, curling and clustering lovingly over the tiniest of tiny ears, and the softest, whitest neck that ever mortal maiden was blessed with; long silken eyelashes, fringing lids only less beautiful than the dear earnest eyes they cover. Fancy all this, and fancy, too, if you can, the expression of perfect goodness and purity that lit up the sweet features of the slumbering maiden with a beauty almost angelic, and you will see what the Baron saw that night. Not quite all, however, for the Baron's vision paused not at the bedside before him, but had passed on from the face of the sleeping maiden to another face as lovely, that of the young wife, Bertha's mother, who had, years before, taken her angel beauty to the angels.

The goblin spoke to the Baron's thought. 'Wonderfully like her, is she not, Baron?' The Baron slowly inclined his head.

'You made her very happy, didn't you?' The tone in which the goblin spoke was harsh and mocking. 'A faithful husband, tender and true! She must have been a happy wife, eh, Baron?'

The Baron's head had sunk upon his bosom. Old recollections were thronging into his awakened memory. Solemn vows to love and cherish, somewhat strangely kept. Memories of bitter words, and savage oaths, showered at a quiet uncomplaining figure, without one word in reply. And last, the memory of a fit of drunken passion, and a hasty blow struck with a heavy hand; and then of three months fading away; and last, of her last prayer—for her baby and him.

'A good husband makes a good father, Baron. No wonder you are somewhat chary of rashly entrusting to a suitor the happiness of a sweet flower like this. Poor child! it is hard, though, that she must think no more of him she loves so dearly. See! she is weeping even in her

dreams. But you have good reasons, no doubt. Young Carl is wild, perhaps, or drinks, or gambles, eh? What! none of these? Perhaps he is wayward and uncertain, and you fear that the honied words of courtship might turn to bitter sayings in matrimony. They do, sometimes, eh, Baron? By all means guard her from such a fate as that. Poor tender flower! Or who knows, worse than that, Baron! Hard words break no bones, they say, but angry men are quick, and a blow is soon struck, eh?'

The goblin had drawn nearer and nearer, and laid his hand upon the Baron's arm, and the last words were literally hissed into his ear. The Baron's frame swayed to and fro under the violence of his emotions. At last, with a cry of agony, he dashed his hands upon his forehead. The veins were swollen up like thick cords, and his voice was almost inarticulate in its unnatural hoarseness.

'Torturer, release me! Let me go, let me go and do something to forget the past; or I shall go mad or die!'

He rushed out of the room and paced wildly down the corridor, the goblin following him. At last, as they came near the outer door of the castle, which opened of itself as they reached it, the spirit spoke:

'This way, Baron, this way; I told you there was work for us to do before morning, you know.'

'Work!' exclaimed the Baron, absently, passing his fingers through his tangled hair; 'Oh, yes, work! the harder and the rougher the better; anything to make me forget.'

The two stepped out into the courtyard, and the Baron shivered, though, as it seemed, unconsciously, at the breath of the frosty midnight air. The snow lay deep on the ground, and the Baron's heavy boots sank into it with a crisp, crushing sound at every tread. He was bareheaded, but seemed unconscious of the fact, and tramped on, as if utterly indifferent to anything but his own thoughts. At last, as a blast of the night wind, keener than ordinary, swept over him, he seemed for the first time to feel the

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chill. His teeth chattered, and he muttered, 'Cold, very cold.'

'Ay, Baron,' said the goblin, 'it is cold, even to us, who are healthy and strong, and warmed with wine. Colder still, though, to those who are hungry and half-naked, and have to sleep on the snow.'

'Sleep? snow?' said the Baron. 'Who sleeps on the snow? why, I wouldn't let my dogs be out on such a night as this.'

'Your dogs, no!' said the goblin; 'I spoke of meaner animals—your wretched tenants. Did you not order yesterday, that Wilhelm and Friedrich, if they did not pay their rent to-morrow, should be turned out to sleep on the snow? a snug bed for the little ones, and a nice white coverlet, eh? Ha! ha! twenty florins or so is no great matter, is it? I'm afraid their chance is small, nevertheless. Come and see.'

The Baron hung his head. A few minutes brought them to the first of the poor dwellings, which they entered noiselessly. The fireless grate, the carpetless floor, the broken window-panes, all gave sufficient testimony to the want and misery of the occupants. In one corner lay sleeping a man, a woman, and three children, and nestling to each other for the warmth which their ragged coverlet could not afford. In the man, the Baron recognized his tenant, Wilhelm, one of those who had been with him to beg for indulgence on the previous day. The keen features, and bones almost starting through the pallid skin, showed how heavily the hand of hunger had been laid upon all. The cold night wind moaned and whistled through the many flaws in the ill-glazed, ill-thatched tenement, and rustled over the sleepers, who shivered even in their sleep.

'Ha, Baron,' said the goblin, 'Death is breathing in their faces even now, you see; it is hardly worth while to lay them to sleep in the snow, is it? They would sleep a little sounder, that's all.'

The Baron shuddered, and then, hastily pulling the warm coat from his own shoulders, he spread it over the sleepers.

'Oho!' said the goblin, 'bravely

done, Baron! By all means keep them warm to-night, they'll enjoy the snow more to-morrow, you know.'

Strange to say, the Baron, instead of feeling chilled when he had removed his coat, felt a strange glow of warmth spread from the region of the heart over his entire frame. The goblin's continual allusions to his former intention, which he had by this time totally relinquished, hurt him, and he said, rather pathetically, 'Don't talk of that again, good goblin, I'd rather sleep on the snow myself.'

'Eh! what?' said the goblin, 'you don't mean to say you're sorry? Then what do you say to making these poor people comfortable?'

'With all my heart,' said the Baron, 'if we had only anything to do it with.'

'You leave that to me,' said the goblin, 'your brother fairies are not far off, you may be sure.'

As he spoke he clapped his hands thrice, and before the third clap had died away, the poor cottage was swarming with tiny figures, whom the Baron rightly conjectured to be the fairies themselves.

Now you may not be aware (the Baron wasn't until that night) that there are among the fairies trades and professions, just as with ordinary mortals. However, there they were, each with the accompaniments of his or her particular business, and to it they went manfully. A fairy glazier put in new panes to the shattered windows, fairy carpenters replaced the doors upon their hinges, and fairy painters, with inconceivable celerity, made cupboards and closets as fresh as paint could make them; one fairy housemaid laid and lit a roaring fire, while another dusted and rubbed chairs and tables to a miraculous degree of brightness; a fairy butler uncorked bottles of fairy wine, and a fairy cook laid out a repast of most tempting appearance. The Baron, hearing a tapping above him, cast his eyes upwards and beheld a fairy slater rapidly repairing a hole in the roof; and when he bent them down again, they fell on a fairy doctor mixing a cordial for the sleepers. Nay, there

was even a fairy parson, who, not having any present employment, contented himself with rubbing his hands and looking pleasant, probably waiting till somebody might want to be christened or married. Every trade, every profession or occupation, appeared, without exception, to be represented; nay, we beg pardon, with one exception only, for the Baron used to say, when afterwards relating his experiences to bachelor friends, 'You may believe me or not, sir, there was every mortal business under the sun, *but devil a bit of a lawyer.*'

The Baron could not long remain inactive. He was rapidly seized with a violent desire to do something to help, which manifested itself in insane attempts to assist everybody at once. At last, after having taken all the skin off his knuckles in attempting to hammer in nails in aid of the carpenters, and then nearly tumbling over a fairy housemaid, whose broom he was offering to carry, he gave it up as a bad job, and stood aside with his friend the goblin. He was just about to inquire how it was that the poor occupants of the house were not awakened by so much din, when a fairy Sam Slick, who had been examining the cottager's old clock, with a view to a thorough repair, touched some spring within it, and it made the usual purr preparatory to striking. When lo and behold, at the very first stroke, cottage, goblin, fairies, and all disappeared into utter darkness, and the Baron found himself in his turret-chamber, rubbing his toe, which he had just hit with considerable force against the fender. As he was only in his slippers, the concussion was unpleasant, and the Baron rubbed his toe for a good while. After he had finished with his toe, he rubbed his nose, and finally, with a countenance of deep reflection, scratched the bump of something or other at the top of his head. The old clock on the stairs was striking three, and the fire had gone out. The Baron reflected for a short time longer, and finally decided that he had better go to bed, which he did accordingly.

The morning dawned upon the very ideal, as far as weather was concerned, of a Christmas Day. A bright winter sun shone out just vividly enough to make everything look genial and pleasant, and yet not with sufficient warmth to mar the pure unbroken surface of the crisp white snow, which lay like a never-ending white lawn upon the ground, and glittered in myriad silver flakes upon the leaves of the sturdy evergreens. I'm afraid the Baron had not had a very good night; at any rate, I know that he was wide-awake at an hour long before his usual time of rising. He lay first on one side, and then on the other, and then, by way of variety, turned on his back, with his magenta nose pointing perpendicularly towards the ceiling; but it was all of no use. Do what he would, he couldn't get to sleep, and at last, not long after daybreak, he tumbled out of bed, and proceeded to dress. Even after he was out of bed his fidgetiness continued. It did not strike him, until after he had got one boot on, that it would be a more natural proceeding to put his stockings on first; after which he caught himself in the act of trying to put his trousers on over his head; (which, I may mention for the information of lady readers, who, of course, cannot be expected to know anything about such matters, is not the mode most generally adopted). In a word, the Baron's mind was evidently preoccupied; his whole air was that of a man who felt a strong impulse to do something or other, but could not quite make up his mind to it. At last, however, the good impulse conquered, and this wicked old Baron, in the stillness of the calm bright Christmas morning, went down upon his knees and prayed. Stiff were his knees and slow his tongue, for neither had done such work for many a long day past; but I have read in the Book, of the joy of the angels over a repenting sinner. There needs not much eloquence to pray the Publican's Prayer, and who shall say but there was gladness in heaven that Christmas morning?

The Baron's appearance down-

stairs at such an early hour occasioned quite a commotion. Nor were the domestics reassured when the Baron ordered a bullock to be killed and jointed instantly, and all the available provisions in the larder, including sausage, to be packed up in baskets, with a good store of his own peculiar wine. One ancient retainer was heard to declare, with much pathos, that he feared master had gone 'off his head.' However, 'off his head' or not, they knew the Baron must be obeyed, and in an exceedingly short space of time he sallied forth, accompanied by three servants carrying the baskets, and wondering what in the name of fortune their master would do next. He stopped at the cottage of Wilhelm, which he had visited with the goblin on the previous night. The labours of the fairies did not seem to have produced much lasting benefit, for the appearance of everything around was as wretched as could be. The poor family thought that the Baron had come himself to turn them out of house and home; and the poor children huddled up timidly to their mother for protection, while the father attempted some words of entreaty for mercy. The pale, pinched features of the group, and their looks of dread and wretchedness, were too much for the Baron. 'Eh! what! what do you mean, confound you? Turn you out! Of course not: I've brought you some breakfast. Here! Fritz—Carl; where are the knaves? Now then, unpack, and don't be a week about it. Can't you see the people are hungry, ye villains? Here, lend me the corkscrew.' This last being a tool the Baron was tolerably accustomed to, he had better success than with those of the fairy carpenters: and it was not long before the poor tenants were seated before a roaring fire, and doing justice, with the appetite of starvation, to a substantial breakfast. The Baron felt a queer sensation in his throat at the sight of the poor people's enjoyment, and had passed the back of his hand twice across his eyes when he thought no one was looking; but his emotion fairly rose to boiling point when the poor

father, Wilhelm, with tears in his eyes, and about a quarter of a pound of beef in his mouth, sprang up from the table and flung himself at the Baron's knees, invoking blessings on him for his goodness. 'Get up, you audacious scoundrel!' roared the Baron. 'What the deuce do you mean by such conduct, eh! confound you?' At this moment the door opened, and in walked Mynheer Klootz, who had heard nothing of the Baron's change of intentions, and who, seeing Wilhelm at the Baron's feet, and hearing the latter speaking, as he thought, in an angry tone, at once jumped to the conclusion that Wilhelm was entreating for longer indulgence. He rushed at the unfortunate man, and collared him. 'Not if we know it,' exclaimed he; 'you'll have the wolves for bedfellows to-night, I reckon. Come along, my fine fellow.' As he spoke he turned his back towards the Baron, with the intention of dragging his victim to the door. The Baron's little gray eyes twinkled, and his whole frame quivered with suppressed emotion, which, after the lapse of a moment, vented itself in a kick, and *such* a kick! Not one of your Varsovia flourishes, but a kick that employed every muscle from hip to toe, and drove the worthy steward up against the door, like a ball from a catapult. Misfortunes never come singly, and so Mynheer Klootz found with regard to the kick, for it was followed, without loss of time, by several dozen others, as like it as possible, from the Baron's heavy boots. Wounded lions proverbially come badly off, and Fritz and Carl, who had suffered from many an act of petty tyranny on the part of the steward, thought they could not do better than follow their master's example, which they did to such good purpose, that when the unfortunate Klootz did escape from the cottage at last, I don't believe he could have had any *os sacri* left.

After having executed this little act of poetical justice, the Baron and his servants visited the other cottages, in all of which they were received with dread, and dismissed with blessings. Having completed

his tour of charity, the Baron returned home to breakfast, feeling more really contented than he had done for many a long year. He found Bertha, who had not risen when he started, in a considerable state of anxiety as to what he could possibly have been doing. In answer to her inquiries he told her, with a roughness he was far from feeling, to 'mind her own business.' The gentle eyes filled with tears at the harshness of the reply; perceiving which, the Baron was beyond measure distressed, and chucked her under the chin in what was meant to be a very conciliatory manner. 'Eh! what, my pretty? tears? No, surely. Bertha must forgive her old father. I didn't mean it, you know, my pet; and yet, on second thoughts, yes I did, too.' Bertha's face was overcast again. 'My little girl thinks she has no business anywhere, eh! Is that it? Well, then, my pet, suppose you make it your business to write a note to young Carl von Sempach, and say I'm afraid I was rather rude to him yesterday, but if he'll look over it, and come and take a snug family dinner and a slice of the pudding with us to-day —' 'Why, pa, you don't mean — yes, I do really believe you do —' The Baron's eyes were winking nineteen to the dozen. 'Why, you dear, dear, dear old pa!' And at the imminent risk of upsetting the breakfast table, Bertha rushed at the Baron, and flinging two soft white arms about his neck, kissed him — oh, how she *did* kiss him! I shouldn't have thought, myself, she could possibly have had any left for Carl; but I dare say Bertha attended to his interests in that respect somehow.

Well, Carl came to dinner, and the Baron was, not many years after, promoted to the dignity of a grandpapa, and a very jolly old grandpapa he made. Is that all you wanted to know?

About Klootz? Well, Klootz got over the kicking, but he was dismissed from the Baron's service; and on examination of his accounts, it was discovered that he had been in

the habit of robbing the Baron of nearly a third of his yearly income, which he had to refund; and with the money he was thus compelled to disgorge, the Baron built new cottages for his tenants, and new-stocked their farms. Nor was he the poorer in the end, for his tenants worked with the energy of gratitude, and he was soon many times richer than when the goblin visited him on that Christmas Eve.

And was the goblin ever explained? Certainly not. How dare you have the impertinence to suppose such a thing? An empty bottle, covered with cobwebs, was found the next morning in the turret chamber, which the Baron at first imagined must be the bottle from which the goblin produced his magic wine; but as it was found, on examination, to be labelled 'Old Jamaica Rum,' of course that could not have had anything to do with it. However it was, the Baron never thoroughly enjoyed any other wine after it; and as he did not thenceforth get drunk, on an average, more than two nights a week, or swear more than about eight oaths a day, I think King Christmas may be considered to have thoroughly reformed him. And he always maintained, to the day of his death, that he was changed into a fairy, and became exceedingly angry if contradicted.

Who doesn't believe in fairies after this? I only hope King Christmas may make a few more good fairies this year, to brighten the homes of the poor with the light of Christmas charity. Truly we need not look far for almsmen. Cold and hunger, disease and death, are around us at all times; but at no time do they press more heavily on the poor than at this jovial Christmas season. Shall we shut out, in our mirth and jollity, the cry of the hungry poor? or shall we not rather remember, in the midst of our happy family circles, round our well-filled tables, and before our blazing fires, that our brothers are starving out in the cold, and that the Christmas song of the angels was 'Good-will to men?'

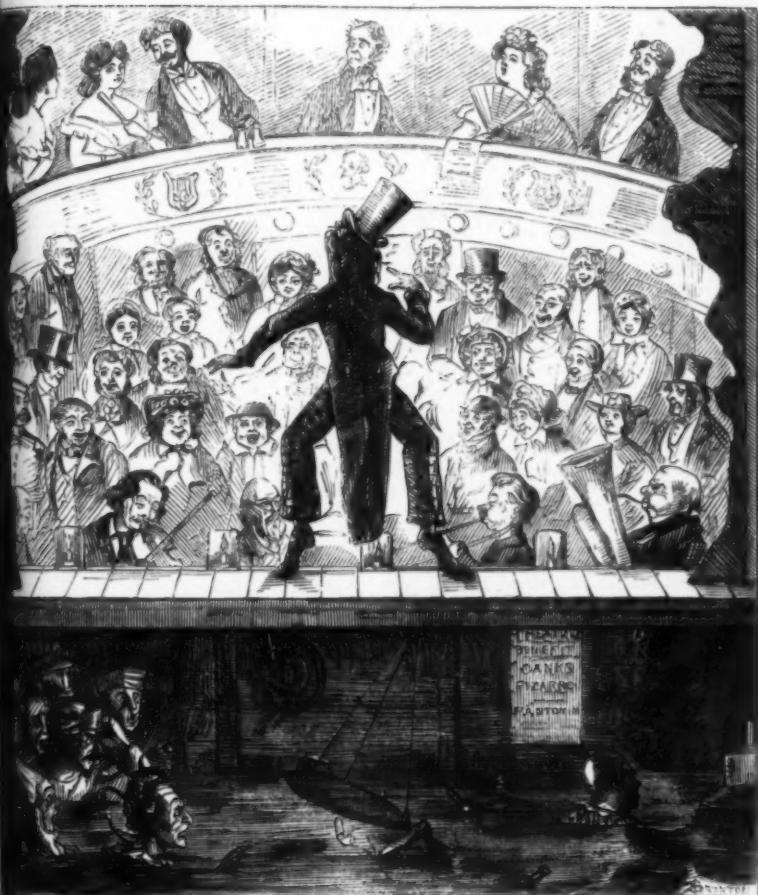
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CHRISTMAS IN A CELLAR.

A Strange Story about a Pantomime.



MORE than three years ago I was sent away from London for the benefit of my health. It would be useless to mention in what breezy spot I spent my exile. Suffice it, that it was highly salubrious, and intolerably dull. I was forbidden to read. Every day seemed to last a week, and every night a

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fortnight. How insignificant were the minor annoyances of draughts, pills, irritating under-clothing, and strict regimen, compared to that intolerable ennui!

What a thrill of pleasure I felt when a long strip of yellow paper informed me that the 'Theatre Royal — would shortly open for

a limited season.' Here was occupation for my dreary evenings. The Theatre Royal — *did* open, and I commenced an acquaintance with the 'Acting Drama,' as published by Cumberland. After the performance, I used to smoke a cigar (tobacco was strictly forbidden, but I smoked nevertheless) in the coffee-room of the Rose and Crown Hotel; and there I met the actor who played the stern parents at the theatre, and was adamant for four acts, only to melt in the fifth, and consent to the union of his son or daughter, as the case might be. He was a very gentlemanly veteran, quite of the old school—took snuff, wore a frill, smiled whenever he was addressed, and had a fatherly manner, acquired by a long course of dramatic paternity. He used to tell singular anecdotes, more or less true, some of them much less than more; among others, one which I thought interesting enough, having obtained his 'kind permission,' to reproduce. I give it in his own words:

'Suckport is a seaport town,' he began, 'situate—as guide-books say—four miles from the sea, and everything in Suckport is of the sea, fishy, from the gilt three-masted ship on the vane over the Town Hall to the rope-walks, timber-yards, and old boats in the outskirts. Every man with money, no matter what his pursuits, keeps a yacht; and it would almost seem as if the small fry of fishermen's children were weaned on boat-hooks.

'The Suckport theatre (I mean the old theatre, for I am speaking of the year 18—) stood, as country theatres always do, at the most inconvenient end of a dirty lane—in fact, it stood upon a wharf, and had been a granary, or store, or warehouse, or something of that sort: the wall at the end that was used for the stage went right down into the dirty river, which, as you might see by the wet space between high and low water-mark, washed it with refuse twice a day.

'It was just eleven o'clock, and a rainy morning, as I picked my steps over the petrified kidneys that did not pave the lane that led to the stage-door. It was a melancholy

lane, beginning with a little chapel rented by the Primitive Muggletonians (junior branch), then going into stables and back premises, then asserting itself hideously with a reeking slaughterhouse in the centre, returning to stables and back premises, and terminating with a rabbit-hutch-looking stage-door. Not an object could be seen but a misanthropic cock and three draggle-tailed hens. I walked on to the stage, which was as chill and cheerless as stages usually are on January mornings, and, as I looked into the vacant darkness visible, my old notion came into my head of the likeness of an empty theatre to an empty coffin.

'It was a queer old building, that ex-warehouse that had been converted into a temple of the drama, and among other requirements for the dramatic art, boasted extensive cellars. Messrs. Cape and Coriander, the great wine merchants, at one time kept all their stock there, until one high tide the water rushed in, smashed the bottles, and so damaged Messrs. Cape and Coriander, that they were forced to turn bankrupts—not that it hurt them, for afterwards they were richer men than ever. Then extensive alterations were made, and thick walls built to keep out the tide; but Messrs. Cape and Coriander never again housed their wine there. I suppose they did not like the water mingling itself in their affairs so publicly.

'Not a soul but myself had thought proper to be punctual for rehearsal. The first call was for "Pizarro" at eleven; the pantomime to follow. Our manager, Mr. O'Warreboyle, never set a good example, and rehearsals usually began at all sorts of hours. Annoyed at having left my comfortable fire, I went back to the stage-door, and stood looking out into the rain.

'Two men stood at the end of the lane. After exchanging a few words, one of them disappeared, and the other tramped up to me.

"This here the playhouse?" he asked.

"This is the theatre," I replied, trying to impress him, but failing signally.

"Ah! yes; the-ay-ter, if you like it better," he said. "Mr. O'Warreboyle is manager, isn't he?"

The coolness of the man's questions and the rudeness of his manner annoyed me. I had played leading business—I was the *Pizarro* of that evening. I therefore looked out into the rain, and feigned not to hear.

"No offence, master," said the man, after a pause, "but Mr. Terence O'Warreboyle is manager, isn't he?"

Without deigning to turn my head in the direction of his voice, I answered "Yes."

"Is he in the way, master?"

"No."

"Sure?" inquired the man, in a tone of the strongest doubt.

"This was too much! I turned upon my heel and walked back to the stage.

A few minutes after the prompter, Sticknam, arrived, and shortly after Seaudrey and Mrs. Foljambe, who played *Valverde* and *Elvira*.

"Now we can begin," said I.

I had no sooner uttered the words than I perceived by the light of a long slit or opening in the wall, which let in the cold and the rain, and did duty as a window, that Mrs. Foljambe was in tears. I asked what was the matter.

"Oh! that brute Foljambe!" replied the lady; "not home till four o'clock this morning, and tipsy as—ugh!" and she began to cry.

Mrs. Foljambe was older than her husband, and it was said led him a life. The real fact was, Foljambe was a drunken little dog, and spent money faster than his majestic and talented lady could earn it. Personally he was not worth his salt, but he was engaged for the sake of his wife.

"I wish he was dead, I do!" said the poor woman.

"Hush! hush!" said I, "don't say that!"

"But I do say it, and I mean it—a little wretch! I shall never know a moment's peace till he has drunk himself into his grave!"

"Hush!" I repeated, for I saw the figures of young Judson and Dossmore emerging from the gloom. "Will he be here this morning?"

"No; he's in bed, little brute!"

Rehearsal began. *Ataliba* (Foljambe) was absent, and so was *Rolla* (O'Warreboyle). Sticknam told us that O'W., as we called him, had gone to Dundringham, to arrange about our opening there the following month. O'W. would not have been a bad actor for a manager had he not been afflicted with such a terrible brogue. He had been educated at Trinity College, Dublin—at least he said so. I have never been in Ireland, but I should think Trinity must be a large college, for all the Irishmen I have ever met date from it. "Pizarro" was run through—I mean the rehearsal, not the character—in the usual ramshackle way; and then we commenced the pantomime, in which I went on for the *Demon Singe-his-wig-off*, King of the Subterranean Salamanders. The performance that night was for little Canks's benefit. Canks was our property-man, and never acted except upon his benefit, when he always played clown—which he considered to be a triumph of dramatic art—in fact, he was a disappointed Grimaldi, and I believe would have broken his heart if he had not been permitted to "clown" once in each town in the circuit.

I got home about three and dined. My wife looked out my armour, and sent our eldest boy to the hairdresser's with my black-ringlet wig. We expected the pantomime to draw a good house. Old Proper, the great banker, had promised his support. He only visited the theatre twice a season—once at the bespeak of the Conservative member, and once when "Pizarro" was performed, which play he considered the finest modern production of the human mind.

During the whole of that day I felt an unaccountable depression of spirits that I could not shake off; however, at six o'clock I started for the theatre, my carpet-bag in one hand, and my rapier, muffled in a gun-case, in the other. I should here mention that the stage was on the same level as the ground, and that the gentlemen's dressing-room was immediately under the stage;

the ladies, as was right they should, had a comfortable room over the stage, but our den was the most wretched place conceivable. It had formed part of the cellarage that had been so luckily ruinous to Messrs. Cape and Coriander, and was a dingy hole. Though we put boards over that portion of the brick floor on which we dressed, and made our stove red hot, nothing could keep out the fearful cold, nor the damp, earthy smell, and flavour of wet sawdust, unwashed bottles, and stale river. It was like dressing in a furnished sewer or dry drain; in truth, the cellar was beneath the level of the water at high tide.

Each actor's dressing-place was lighted by a candle in a tin socket. O'W. would not go to the expense of gas fittings; there was also, for the diffusion of a general light, a hoop suspended from the ceiling with candles stuck in it—a sort of cheap impromptu chandelier, such as is sometimes hung up in dancing-booths at country fairs. To gain this comfortless crypt we had to descend a flight of stone stairs, picturesquely worn and uneven as with heavy coopers and drunken cellarmen. Our dressing-place, or dressing-table, was merely a few stout planks nailed together by the stage carpenter; and it had been a portion of the paternal thoughtfulness of our spirited and enterprising manager to fix this dressing-bench on the opposite side of the cellar to the staircase, which gave us the trouble of crossing a floor whose every clammy brick seemed charged with cramps and rheumatisms, and to be sworn cemented foes to legs and feet encased in silk stockings, thin shoes, fleshings, and Roman sandals.

Little Canks had a very good house. The Proppers were in the stage-box in regal state, Mr. Prop- per, in the attitude of the county member, with his fat hand thrust into his white waistcoat, and lost among his frill. Every time O'Warreboyle uttered a patriotic sentiment in Dublin English, old Prop- per received it as if it were the toast of the evening, pulled the edge of his box with his disengaged hand,

and cried "Hear, hear!" after the fashion of members of the House of Commons and convivial clubs. The effect was very funny. In the address to the Peruvian army (four of them), O'Warreboyle shouted:

"My br-r-r-eeve associates! Par-r-r-ners in my toils, my feel- ings, and my feeme! Can R-rol-la's wor-r-ds add vigour to the vir- tuous ener-r-gies that inspire your harruts?"

"No! no!" interrupted Prop- per.

"The thr-r-one we honour-r is the people's choice!" proceeded O'W. (*not Rol-la*).

"Hear! hear!" said Prop- per.

"The laws that gov-ver-ri us are our brave fawthers' legaccee!"

"So they are!" said Prop- per.

"The faith we r-rever-rence teaches us to live in bonds of amice with all mankind, with surest hope of our Creator's mercee and r-re- war-rud hereafter!"

"Bra-vo! Very good!" from Prop- per.

"Tell your invadthers this!"

"Yea! yea!"

"And tell them, too, we seek no change!"

"Hear! he-ar!" said the banker, perhaps thinking of his notes.

"And, *least* of all, such change as THEY would br-r-ing us!"

"Bra-vo!" shouted Prop- per, amid thunders of applause.

O'Warreboyle dared not offend the banker, but I know he *felt* daggers, though he looked none.

The piece went off very well, though that little wretch Foljambe was the tipsiest of *Atalibas*. I observed that the eyes of his wife were still red, but she had reached the dignified and majestic degree of conjugal quarrel, and took not the slightest notice of him, though spurred to it by his remarking whenever she came near him, "Oh! isn't she cross?" The combat between me and that stupid Dossmore was rapturously applauded, and the curtain fell amid great enthusiasm, O'W., as was his custom, insisting in joining in his own dirge, as he lay upon his bier—a butcher's cratch, borrowed from the slaughter-house in the lane.

After the play, O'W. told me he

had had had luck at Dunderingham, and feared he should not be able to open there. He owed the proprietors a year's rent, and they insisted on payment before reoccupation. O'W. did very well with his six towns, but he was an extravagant man, and gambled fearfully. I tried to cheer him up, and then descended the stone staircase to dress for the 'demon in the pantomime.

'No sooner had my feet touched the floor than a sudden chill seized them. I looked down and saw that the bricks were wet—there was water at least two inches deep upon them. I asked what was the matter, but nobody seemed to know. Little Canks, dressed as clown, was telling Judson, dressed for harlequin, of his triumph at his last benefit, and how his "leap" had been encoired. I sat down in my chair, and took off my wig and leg armour. I was unbuckling my breastplate, when I heard a tremendous noise—a noise as if the whole theatre were falling on us with a terrific crash. With the quick instinct of fear, every man rushed to the staircase. Half across the cellar we were met by a vast volume of water, which, roaring like a furnace, tumbled in upon us, and lashed us back.

'The brickwork of the dam or river wall had given way, and the flood was upon us.

'It rolled in rapidly. We mounted upon the dressing-place, which was about three feet from the ground. The water soon covered our knees, and stole swiftly higher and higher, till it reached my chin. I thought my time had come, when my foot struck against my dressing-case, an article about eighteen inches high. I stood upon it, and, my head and shoulders free, looked out upon the black death around me.

'Had it not been for my poor little dressing-case I should not now be alive to tell this story. As it was, I felt the greatest difficulty in keeping my footing against the strong, powerful, cruel flood.

'The inundation had evidently gained its level. The surface of the water just touched the bottom of

the hoop in which the candles were stuck. The noise ceased, save a lashing and surging at the sides of our wet tomb. Shall I ever forget the sight? The flare of the candles reflected in the black, slimy pool—the low ceiling, the half-light, the filthy smell of the putrescent water, the rolling empty bottles, the floating chairs, the horror and the awe of knowing that the few frail planks on which we stood could not long support our weight. The row of eight living heads against the wall; Canks, with his clown's paint swept off, but the wig, with its three grotesque tails, still sticking out from his ashy, fear-palsied face.

'I felt the boards beneath me crack. I shut my eyes tightly, prepared for death, and prayed to God for myself and my wife and children.

'At that moment we heard a burst of applause above us, and Toll-drum, our low comedian, began his song.

'Some time ago lived near this place,
In one of the streets of the town,
A respectable man, who was called
By the neighbourhood Gentleman Brown.
Very often fine parties he gave,
At which in champagne you might drown;
And 'twas truth and a fact, the whole street
Was jealous of Gentleman Brown.
Jokery—jeery—quizz!
To the story I'm telling, oh! hat!
How happy we mortals might be,
If jealousy didn't exist.'

'And the audience, as was their custom, broke into full chorus. I can remember the words now; they are cut into my memory as a name is cut into a tombstone.

'The dreadful truth flashed upon us, that on the stage and in the house they had not heard the crash of the brickwork or the rush of the water; that they knew not of our fate; and we were doomed.

'The planks beneath us still remained firm. I heard a splash. I opened my eyes and looked out upon the poisonous well again. I saw Judson, who had thrown himself into the flood, swimming towards the staircase. At every stroke he was impeded by the chairs, tables, and lumber, floating about him. If he succeeded in gaining the stairs, he

could inform those above of our entombment. To be rescued, assistance must be immediate. In a few minutes, if we escaped drowning, the foul, pent-up air of our dungeon would have stifled us.

"Our lives depended upon Judson. He struck out bravely. We watched him with eager hope and sickening fear. As he swam by the hoop, his foot kicked it, and the candles it contained fell into the putrid flood.

"All was darkness!

"The agony of that moment was supreme!

"In the absence of light to guide him, Judson, even if he kept afloat, could not reach the staircase: then there was the weight of the wet dress and heavy spangles upon his legs and body! I listened! I heard a groan: he had sunk to rise no more.

"*"I have been a wicked man,"* cried the voice of Canks from out the darkness, "but I repent, and truly. I cannot hold on much longer. Good-bye! God bless you all! We cannot see, but we can hear each other. Say 'God bless you,' back again to me."

"*"God bless you!"* said the voices, slowly and fearfully.

"The solemn words mingled with the repetition of the chorus of the comic song singing above our heads!

"The vapours of death were rising round us—and what a death! To die to the sound of song and music, pent up in a wet charnel-house. I tried to shout, but my voice failed. I heard a confused sound as of prayer, and joined in it.

"The water gurgled in our ears as we implored speedy death or light!

"A brilliant stream burst in over our heads, and I heard a noise of voices!

"Judson had reached the stage. I heard him say:

"*"Hold on! Hold on, lads! Here's help! Deliverance!"*

"The centre trap in the stage had been opened. Lanthorns were lowered, and I saw them tying planks together to float to us.

"A voice shouted, "There's no time to lose! Here's a rope! jump towards it, and we'll drag you up!"

"At the same moment a rope with a noose in it was lowered; but that end of the trap nearest to us was at a distance of four feet, and consequently there were four feet of water and floating obstructions between us and the rope.

"A number of voices shouted "Leap!" I was nearest, and made the first attempt. Recommending my soul to God, and knowing that my brother-actors would not leave my wife and children to starvation, I closed my eyes, and leapt.

"I caught the rope; my left arm and my head went into the middle of the noose. The shock plunged me down into the filthy water till my feet touched the cellar floor—at the same moment I lost my hold of the rope. I gave myself up, for I feared that they would draw the rope up from me. There was a buzzing in my ears as I thrust forth my arm in desperation. I caught the rope again, and felt myself hauled upwards. Something struck me on the head. The foul water filled my mouth, my senses reeled, and my fear, during those awful moments of immersion, was that I should faint and lose my grasp of the few twisted strands between me and doom. I tried hard to keep my consciousness. It was in-vain. All I remember was a sensation of quick motion and of dazzling light.

"When I returned to sense, I found myself lying upon the stage. All my companions had been saved but one—poor tipsy Foljambe.

"It was a strange sight to see us kneel round the closed trap, in our soiled torn stage bravery, and thank Heaven for our deliverance.

"*"Where is Arthur?"* asked Mrs. Foljambe.

"We rose and looked at each other. There was a dead silence.

"*"Oh!"* shrieked the poor woman, who had just heard of our danger, and had run down from her room half dressed. "He is dead! He is dead! He is dead!"

"She tore open the trap, and would have plunged head foremost, had we not held her back. Her screams alarmed the audience, some of whom jumped on to the stage, and came behind the curtain.

'The trap was closed, and the bereaved wife was in a fit of violent hysterics, when a voice was heard to say:

"What's the matter? Has anything happened?"

'It was Foljambe, who had thrown his coat and trousers over his Peruvian dress, and been out to the nearest public-house.

'I pass over a description of how Foljambe was received by his wife; how she sobbed over him, and said, "And to think that this morning I wished you dead, my darling, and how near my wicked wishes were fulfilled!" Foljambe took it all as a tribute to his superior merits, and forgave his wife with heroic self-denial. Years after, when she remonstrated with him, he used to remind her that three pennyworth of gin once saved his life.

"Well," said O'Warreboyle, "let us be thankful nobody's been drowned, for now we can get on with the pantomime!"

Here little Canks broke in with tremendous wrath, and rebuked his

manager for daring to wish men that moment rescued from a dreadful death to tumble and make faces, and swore that nothing should induce him 'to clown' that night. O'Warreboyle scowled; but feeling that he had no choice but to yield, was going before the curtain to make an apology, when the two strange men I had seen in the morning, walked up and arrested him.

'Old Propper, in consideration of his noble sentiments as *Rolla*, became his bail. The debt was only 40/-, and Sticknam told the audience what had happened. They left the theatre grumbling loudly. They said they had paid their money to see the pantomime, and it was a swindle not to play it.

'We never acted in the theatre after, but had a benefit at the Town Hall. My wife was very grateful for my escape, and said to me the next day, "What a pity, Adolphus, that your suit of gold-leather armour is entirely spoiled, and will never be fit to wear again!"

T. W. R.

A CHRISTMAS DREAM.

A PILGRIM to the West returned, whose palm-branch, drenched in dew, Shook off bright drops like childhood's tears when childhood's heart is new,

Stole up the hills at eventide, like mist in wintry weather,
Where locked in dream-like trance I lay, at rest among the heather.

The red ferns, answering to his tread, sent up a savour sweet;
The yellow gorse, like Magian gold, glowed bright about his feet:
The waving brooms, the winter blooms, each happy voice in air,
Grew great with life and melody, as if a Christ stood there.

Unlike to mortal man was he. His brow rose broad and high:
The peace of Heaven was on his lip, the God-light in his eye;
And rayed with richer glory streamed, through night and darkness shed,
To crown that holy Pilgrim's brow, the one star overhead.

Long gazing on that staff he bore, beholding how it grew,
With sprouts of green, with buds between, and young leaves ever new,
The marvels of the Eastern land I bade him all unfold,
And thus to my impassioned ears the wondrous tale he told.

' Each growth upon that sacred soil where One died not in vain,
Though crushed and shed, though seeming dead, in beauty lives again :
The branching bough the knife may cleave, the root the axe may sever,
But on the ground His presence lighted, nothing dies for ever.

' Where once amid the lowly stalls fell soft the Virgin's tear,
The littered straw 'neath children's feet turns to green wheat in ear.
The corn He pluck'd on sabbath-days, though ne'er it feels the sun,
Though millions since have trod the field, bears fruit for every one.

' The palms that on His way were strewn wave ever in the air ;
From clouded earth to sun-bright heaven they form a leafy stair.
In Cana's bowers the love of man is touched by the Divine ;
And snows that fall on Galilee have still the taste of wine.

' Where thy lost locks, poor Magdalen ! around His feet were rolled,
Still springs in woman's worship-ways the gracious Mary-gold :
Men know when o'er that bowed-down head they hear the angels weeping,
The purer spirit is not dead—not dead, but only sleeping.

' Aloft on blackened Calvary no more the shadows lour :
Where fell the piercing crown of thorns, there blooms a thorn in flower.
Bright on the prickled holy-tree and mistletoe appear,
Reflecting rays of heavenly shine, the blood-drop and the tear.

' The sounding rocks that knew His tread wake up each dead abyss,
Where echoes caught from higher worlds ring gloriously in this :
And, leaning where His voice once filled the Temple where He taught,
The listener's eyes grew spirit-full—full with a heavenly thought.'

The Pilgrim ceased. My heart beat fast. I marked a change of hue ;
As if those more than mortal eyes a soul from God looked through.
Then rising slow as angels rise, and soaring faint and far,
He passed my bound of vision, robed in glory, as a star.

Strange herald-voices filled the air : glad anthems swelled around :
The wakened winds rose eager-voiced, then lapsed in dreamy sound.
It seemed all birds that wintered far, drawn home by some blessed power,
Made music in the Christmas woods, mistaking of the hour.

A new glad spirit raptured me ! I woke to breathe the morn,
With heart fresh-strung to Charity—as though a Christ were born.
Then knew I how each earth-born thought, though tomb'd in clay it seem,
It bursts the sod, it soars to God, transfigured in a dream.

ELEANORA L. HERVEY.



CHRISTMAS IN WHITECHAPEL:

Mr. Wilkins's Pudding Club.

I THINK there had not been a hotter day throughout the summer. The pavement was scorching under the white blaze of the August sun, and the bleached cobble-stones of the roadway of Whitechapel High Street stood out bald-looking and shiny, and suggestive of blisters. It was a market day, and the broad-wheeled hay-carts with their fat loads stood in rank in the middle of the highway, the tarry tarpaulins hanging flaccidly about the crisp russet trusses and down on to the gleaming grit-brightened wheel-tires, and over the wheel spokes and over the wheel boxes, dry as touchwood and cored with inflammable material, making a picture which would sorely have tried an incendiary with a match in his pocket had he happened to pass that way. There was

no life in the long cab rank. Except in the case of the first cab, the driver of which sat on his box with his throat bare and comforting himself with a damp wash-leather, not a cabman was to be seen; while the collars hung heavily about the limp necks of the cab horses, and they snorted discontentedly in the depths of their husky nosebags.

Business was stagnant. 'Butchers' Row might have been 'Brokers,' or any other, save for the greasiness of the closed shutters and the big meat-hooks in the doorposts, and the unmistakably butchers' dogs, dozing on the thresholds and in the corners. Screened behind the 'Morning Advertiser,' the baker was comfortably nodding over the political leader; despite the seasonable announcement of 'Rich Pippin

Cyder,' conspicuous in the window of the 'Tray of Hearts,' the doors of that tavern stood fruitlessly ajar, and the penny ice shop could exhibit to the drouthy wayfarer nothing more seductive than some little drops of ill-coloured liquid in a row of fly-spattered glasses. The ice shopkeeper was not visible, but behind the shop was a sort of store-room for lemonade and ginger-beer, dismal but delightfully shady, and on the summit of a stack of cool stone bottles reclined a pair of blucher-boots, and which from the circumstance of their being overlapped by trowser-hems, probably contained the ice shopkeeper's feet. Everybody, everything seemed done up by the excessive heat. Even Mr. Hyams, of the 'Whitechapel Clothing Emporium,' and who by nature was less liable to sunburn than most men, had been compelled to abandon his post at the door, and was to be seen reclining under a shady grove of fashionable paletots, sucking lemons.

Although protected by an umbrella, it was slow work getting over the hot stones; and therefore one had ample leisure to observe these things and many others, but of so kindred a character, that looking for them became tedious; and it was a positive relief to close one's eyes as nearly as was consistent with safety and to jog on, likening the creaking of one's umbrella to the chafing at her moorings of a Twickenham pleasure-boat, and thinking on green rushes and floating with the stream. Had my imaginary voyage been real, and suddenly interrupted by the loosening of the boat's plug, or the sudden grounding on a shelving bank, my astonishment could hardly have been greater than it presently was, for opening my eyes for a good wide look out preparatory to blinking off to Twickenham again, I lighted full on a grocer's shop, with a busy grocer in it.

Yes! the grocer was at work! He of all men! There he was with the sun blazing down upon the broad white blind which overhung his window, illuminating his bald head with a soft and mellow light, such as is reflected on a joint from

a new meat-screen. Up to his elbows in sweets and stickiness, he was tastily arranging his stock—his Jamaica foots, his sparkling lump, his Fow-chow mixture, at three-and-four, as serenely as though it were December.

Why had the grocer selected so preposterous a time for his job? Several moments' reflection failed to provide a satisfactory solution to the mystery, till suddenly the truth flashed to my mind! By observation he had arrived at the knowledge that at the hottest hour of the afternoon, replete with good things, the flies and bluebottles were languid and drowsy, and preferred reposing on the ceiling to the labour of flying! This was his opportunity! His task would be completed before the hungry horde began to stir!

It was impossible to withhold admiration for so subtle a calculator, and halting in the shady lee of a hay-cart which overlooked his premises, I continued to observe him. His stock arranged, he commenced gumming business placards to the inside of his window. He began with the bottom panes and then proceeded to deal with the side ones, leaving the middle space clear. That this space was intended for the reception of one large bill was manifest, for there lay the bill, although with its back towards me, atop of the Patras currants. It was nothing to me what the large bill was about, and I believe it was chiefly because the hay, when closely approached, smelt so fragrant, and because the hay-cart shaft was of such a nice height to rest a corn-afflicted foot on, that I lingered to see the finish of the bill sticking.

He was such a long time gumming it that I was fairly on the way to Twickenham again, when, with a dexterous flourish, he turned the face of the placard to the window, and I was back in a twinkling. *It was about Christmas!* With his sugar liquefying against the glass on which it rested, with his figs revolting against their stifling stowage in their native drums and visibly dissolving partnership, in sight of thousands of fagged and fainting flies and bluebottles, the grocer

was making public the announcement that 'Wilkins's Christmas Pudding Club had commenced!' What did it mean? Was it a blunder? Was Wilkins an unlettered man and had mistaken this monstrously unseasonable placard for one concerning 'lump-sugar for preserving, or that stack of pine-apples just delivered? Was he a relative of the grocer—a lunatic—who, availing himself of the lethargy which had seized on this household in common with every other, had escaped from his room and was now amusing himself among the stock? In either case it was only a humane act to step in and speak about it.

As, prepared for the worst, I entered the shop, there was, however, nothing wild in Mr. Wilkins's demeanour, and the nimble leap he made from the window was not accompanied by a maniac howl, but by the calmest and most business-like inquiry as to what I wanted. Half a pound of figs, I told him.

'You commence your Christmas Club rather early this year,' I ventured, indicating by a glance what I alluded to.

'Same as last year, sir,' replied Mr. Wilkins, 'same as all the years since I've been here, which is nine. Eighteen weeks is the length it runs, you know, sir. Geese run less, I believe. Praps it was geese you was thinking of, sir?'

'No,' I replied, driven back to the suspicion that after all Mr. Wilkins could not possibly be right in his head; 'I was not thinking of geese. Why should I?'

'Only as being a feature of the subject, and it being so easy to mix things wrongly; at least, it is so with me,' replied the grocer, amiably; 'that, and some of the features running long and others running short. Take geese. If single, they run but fourteen or, at the outside, fifteen weeks; but if a bottle of gin or rum goes with 'em, which, since the public has taken them up, is most common, they'll run just as long as a pudding, as a moment's calculation will show you they must—goose six-and-six, gin two-and-six, and there you are. Did you belong to our club last year, sir?'

I was obliged to confess that I did not, but excused myself on the ground that I was ignorant of its existence.

'Best thing out, for a man with a family,' returned the grocer, briskly, and furtively taking my measure as a family man, 'or *not* with a family,' continued he, influenced, probably, by the inspection; 'because you see he may pay as low as threepence a week, which ain't missed, and tells up in the end, and comes in useful to the young and married with a small or no family, or single and living in lodgings, perhaps?'

'He wouldn't want four-and-six-pence worth of pudding,' I remarked, shirking Mr. Wilkins's bland interrogatory.

'He would not, sir,' replied Mr. Wilkins, 'and what is more, he would be a foolish young man to be tied to it. But in *our* club he is *not* tied to it. He haves it out in what he likes and when he likes. I ain't got my this year's bills in yet,' continued he, ducking down to search for something under the counter, and evidently resolved on enrolling me a member of his pudding club. 'I ain't got a new bill; but if I can find an old 'un, you'll be able to see all about it.'

I had gone too far to retreat handsomely, and my only chance was, that he might *not* find an 'old 'un.' But he did, and produced it with his face so red, and his white shirt-sleeves so grimed with dust through battling with the stowage among which the 'old 'un' was found, that it would have been a cruel thing to have treated it with unconcern. As he had said, by aid of the little handbill you were enabled to see all about it. You saw that in Wilkins's 'Annual Christmas Pudding Club' you might, by a weekly payment of sixpence for the term of eighteen weeks, insure the delivery on Christmas-eve of the following good things:—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
4 lbs. finest Valencia	1	8
3 lbs. Patras Currants	1	3
$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Candied Peel	0	5
1 oz. Allspice	0	4
$\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Nutmegs	0	2
$\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. Moist Sugar	1	6

	s.	d.
2 lbs. Sparkling Lump . . .	1	0
$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Best Tea (black or mixed)	2	0
$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Coffee	0	8
	9	0

Threepence per week secures half the above quantity.

To this last line Mr. Wilkins directed my especial attention. However, I went in for the full amount, and having received my initiation card, on which the contribution was duly inscribed, I pocketed it, and then, being in no hurry, and seeing that he was inclined for a chat, I broke into the fig parcel, and we fell to talking on Christmas clubs generally.

One of the first things I learnt from Mr. Wilkins's conversation was, that I never was more wrong in my life than when I supposed that Mr. Wilkins's brain was affected. On the contrary, he was about as shrewd a person as one could wish to deal with. He was born in Whitechapel, and bred in Whitechapel, and knew the ways and means of that mysterious parish completely. He was not a little proud of his knowledge, and try how you might to pin him to the subject you took most interest in, he would break away at the smallest opportunity, and talk about the Jews in Cutler Street, the thieves in Little Keate Street, and the colony of German window-menders in Back Church Lane. Not that it was his ignorance of the Christmas Club question which made him shy of it. 'The Cock and Bottle' in Cable Street was kept by his brother, who was among the earliest promoters of 'Gin and Goose' clubs; a young man who was keeping company with his sister was barman at Whistler's, the 'Bell and Spiggot' down by the old church, where the 'Leviathan Christmas Sweep' was held. Of the existence of sucking-pig and leg of pork clubs he was well aware, but his experience of them was small, being limited, indeed, to having once joined one in a neighbourly way; and, never dreaming it necessary to examine the

rules of the club, was trapped into a most villainous bargain in consequence. The name and address of the wrong-doer I have forgotten (though both were cheerfully confided to me by Mr. Wilkins), but it happened in this way. The pigs were guaranteed to be ten-pound pigs, at least; were to be drawn for by ticket, and the excess weight of any pig to be paid for at the rate of tenpence per pound. The pig Mr. Wilkins drew weighed a little short of five stone; nevertheless, the porkman kept the grocer to his bargain, would hear of no compromise, and twice a day, for the space of a week, delivered the pig on to the grocer's counter, who as many times returned it; till at last being, as he observed, sick and tired of the sight and smell of it, he, in a fit of exasperation, pitched it into the road; being afterwards sued to the county court by the porkman and condemned in debt and costs.

By way of soothing Mr. Wilkins's feelings, ruffled by the unpleasant reminiscence, I reverted to his own club, and inquired concerning the average number of members who joined it. To my surprise he replied, 'Between three and four hundred.'

'That's the number that *join*, you understand, not the number that keeps up their payments. Bless your soul, it ain't one in three that does. Height of summer, you know, plenty of work; Saturday night; she with the lamb and the peas and the Kentish cherries loading her basket, he with both his hands in his pockets, big as bull beef. "Hey! why here's Wilkins's puddin' club commenced! We'll join that this year, anyhow, John!" So they join, and pay their first sixpence. So they do the next week, and four or five more p'raps, till the weather begins to break. Then it's a miss. Then it's three-pence. Then it's another miss—a whole lot of 'em. Then it's. "Please Mr. Wilkins, mother says may she have half an ounce of tea and a quarter of a pound of sugar off her puddin' card?" So it goes in dribs and drabs, and come Christmas, they ain't got a penn'orth to draw on.'

'So that, after all,' I remark, 'it

is only the well-to-do people that you retain in your club.'

'No, no; there you're wrong,' explains the grocer. 'Say I keep a hundred all through, how will they be divided? Say, twenty comfortably-off people, who can spare sixpence, and join for the fun of the thing, as one may say; say, well, forty regular-wages people, who can pay their sixpences with only just a little pinching; and the rest—the other forty, and there'll be full that—of the sort to whom the pudding-club is the greatest blessing of any. You see, that is what makes all the difference between pudding-clubs and goose-clubs, and any other in the meat or drink way,' continued Mr. Wilkins, with the air of a man who feels confidence in his opinion; 'they enable the very hard-up ones—the ones with sick fathers, and the widows—to make a Christmas show, as one may say, and get over the day without being asked a lot of awkward questions by their young 'uns. When the pudding's there it's all there. It's Christmas Eve, too, as well as Christmas; for there's the plums got to be stoned, and the lemon-peel got to be chopped, and each of 'em gets a stir, and off they go to bed, though they get nothing else, certain of its being Christmas Eve, and that when they wake up it will be Christmas. Now a goose is what I call a fancy article; it wants drawing, it wants trussing, it wants carving; in fact, it wants a many things which are enough to set the working classes against it; and it's my private opinion sir, that it's curiosity, and nothing else, which keeps goose-clubs on their legs, and that as soon as every labouring man has had a try at it, sir, down they'll come. Besides, what's the goose really got to do with Christmas? that's what I could never make out,' continued Mr. Wilkins; 'why, it's anything; it's a dish for the spring, it's a dish for Michaelmas, it's a dish whenever you like to make it one; it's doosed dear, too, and there's nothing on it after you've bought it. Look here now; put the question in a fair and proper light. Take a family—one of the hard-up ones of which we were just speaking—and

make 'em chiefly boys, of from six to thirteen years of age; cut off all their prospect of having any dinner at all on Christmas, and then, on the Christmas Eve, at the very last moment, when they have nearly sat the fire out, talking about last Christmas Eve, all of a sudden ask 'em whether they would rather have a goose or a pudding to-morrow? I don't say go as far as showing them the two in a raw state to choose from, because the goose is a very tempting thing to look at, and would have the advantage; but simply say, 'Boys, which shall it be to-morrow—roast goose, or a whacking great hot plum-pudding? Why, they'd shout "Plum-pudding!" before the words were out of your mouth.'

Had I been called on to repeat Mr. Wilkins's observations on the Christmas club question at the time they were uttered, I should doubtless have been able to give them at greater length; but from the time they were addressed to me to that of my being reminded of them many weeks elapsed—eighteen, in fact. Eighteen, to the day—to the afternoon; for it was on the afternoon of August 12th when occurred that extremely hot walk through the Whitechapel Road, and here was afternoon of December 24th. How it happened that the Whitechapel business recurred to my memory on the latter date was, that turning out the accumulated stowage of my travelling pocket-book, I lit on my pudding-club card, with its solitary sixpenny subscription, entered by Mr. Wilkins, and proved by that gentleman's inimitable T. W.

My mood for musing was by no means disturbed by the chance discovery of the forgotten scrap of pasteboard. I fell to thinking on Christmas clubs generally, and specially on what the Whitechapel grocer had told me concerning his. It was growing dusk, and there was a notification on Mr. Wilkins's subscription card, that 'the goods were to be delivered on Christmas Eve.' How about the poor mothers mentioned by Mr. Wilkins—'the very hard-up sort'—who had no other means of making a show of Christmas

except by making a pudding? It was growing dusk and duskier, and the hour of the poor mothers' triumph was approaching. Very hard-up people have a habit of teating early. It is a maxim among these poor economists of chips and candlewicks that the natural operations of eating and drinking can be performed as well without as with the assistance of the visual organs (better without, indeed, in times of dearth of butter), and therefore, in the dark months, elect to take tea 'between the lights.' So there sits poor mother on one side of the fire, and there sits father on the other. How many boys and girls there are is not certain, for you can only get a glimpse of them by the unsteady light of the fire, and they are all so quiet that you would never guess their number by the sound of their tongues. They are quiet, listening to the momentous conversation going on between mother and father. 'Oh, well, it's no use making yourself wretched about it, father,' says poor mother, 'it's nobody's business but our own, and God knows we can't help it. I'll make 'em a good big stew. It'll do 'em quite as much good.' (Even now you could not count the small fry by the sound of tongues, a simultaneous and wretched murmur being the only response.) 'Of course, that's right enough, old gal,' replies father, meekly, 'but still — stew! stew! I'll be bound there won't be another stew from here to Whitechapel Church. I say, how would this do? Suppose you was to buy a bit of beef.' 'A bit of what! Poor mother is horrified. 'A little bit of nice flank, and go up to old Wilkins the grocer, and say that we expect a little money punctual at four o'clock on Saturday, and that if he will be kind enough to — Gad! I never see such a lot in all my life! Sure as ever I want to speak in private to your mother, there you are all eyes and ears, like — like a pack of owls!' And certainly the remonstrance was not quite undeserved, for no sooner had father commenced his suggestions concerning Mr. Wilkins — his voice subsiding to a whisper as he proceeded — than up rose a crop of eager

faces, hopefully, fearfully agape to know how mother would take the precious hint. Cowed by father's short though energetic address, they duck down instantly into their corners and on to their stools, and fix their eyes on poor mother's face in blank dismay as she delivers herself most unmistakably on the subject of going trust for a Christmas pudding. She'd sooner eat dry bread!

Then ensues a general silence of anything but a cheerful character. Discontent marks the countenances of the eldest of the little flock (wouldn't *they* go trust with old Wilkins!), tearful eyes and pouting the visages of the youngest; father's last slice rests on the edge of the tea-tray, with but two bites taken out of it, and his hands are plunged to the bottom of his pockets, and his air is that of a man who for two pins would have a row with somebody. Mother is silent too, but when a gassy coal spouts out a little branch of flame, you may perceive a furtive twinkle in her eye, and a suppressed smile about her closed lips which, to anyone not in the secret, would be unaccountable. I do believe that that sharp rascal Joe — aged thirteen, and the eldest — has observed it, and, what is more, that an inkling of the glorious truth is dawning on him. It is plain that it is so; his face, just now so blank, is full of meaning, and he presently utters a great sigh of relief, followed by a cheerful avowal (the little hypocrite!) that he would as soon have stew to-morrow as anything: at which his mother instantly fires up, and says, 'Don't you tell lies, Joe!' So that if Joe was not assured before, he is now, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

But father doesn't see how the game is going. That brief passage of words between Joe and his mother should have opened his eyes, but it did not; indeed, although he is too subdued at present to enter into an argument, he cannot help thinking that it was very kind of Joe to say that he would as soon have stew as anything for his Christmas dinner, and that it was very unkind of his mother to snub him. Mothers are

such acute creatures; she observes this, and feels fit to knock Joe's head off. 'Never mind, father,' says she, 'get on with your tea; something will turn up, I dare say.' Whereon father, who discerns in her tone a touch of relenting, thinks that she has made up her mind to ask old Wilkins credit for plums and currants, and not only finishes his cup, but allows just another half-cup, and this little bottom crust to be pressed on him. Then rising and requesting of mother a penny to get a shave with, he receives sixpence instead, with a little squeeze of the hand, and an intimation that he may as well go round to the 'George' and smoke his pipe for an hour or so. Does not this awaken him? Does it not flash to his recollection that Christmas four years ago, when he came out of 'Guy's,' after lying there seven weeks, that she allowed matters to take pretty much the same course as she now had, and that after all——. There is an expression on father's face which betrays him; yet for the best pound that ever was coined he would not now declare it. He only returns the little squeeze, and mutters 'Bless your heart, old gal,' under his breath, and then puts on his cap and goes off, turning back at the door, by-the-by, to observe to Joe, 'Let us have none of your jolly nonsense, young fellow, about minding the baby while your mother goes out; you'll never get such another mother, I can tell you.'

What is mother's grand secret? *She is the possessor of a paid-up pudding card!* On the evening of the very August day on which I had conversed with Mr. Wilkins, she too had passed his shop on her return from taking home her shoebinding. The first glance at Wilkins's pudding bill instantly brought back to her mind the terrible struggle it was last year to tide over Christmas, as well as a solemn resolution she formed at the time, that, please God she lived, she never again would chance it, but make sure. In she went, and did as I had done. But afterwards she did what I did not do, and what I am afraid I should never find the courage to do, even

though placed as she is—she kept up her payments. Nobody was the poorer: all through the autumn, and into the winter as far as it had gone, she had stitched just for one half-hour longer than usual every day, and that turned in the precious sixpence unknown to anyone, including even Joe, the artful one. Nor was this as difficult to manage as at first may seem. Joseph might make free with drawers, he might even buy a starling, and conceal the bird through an entire week in his father's Sunday hat; but there was one repository he never dare invade, and that was the china butter-boat on the top dresser-shelf; and indeed it would have been hard if he could not keep his mischievous fingers out of this, seeing that its chief contents were mother's marriage certificate, her pawn tickets, and the seven little packets, each containing baby's hair. Under these—under the marriage-certificate even—the pudding-card had lain, never taken out except to be carried to the grocer's, and now it rests in mother's pocket, beautifully signed, 'Paid in full, T. WILKINS.'

Only that it had begun to snow, and Whitechapel is such a very long way from Hornsey, I should like to have gone as far as Wilkins's, and seen how mother looked as she came out of the shop laden with her bulky parcel of grocery. Indeed, to tell the truth, I did get on the omnibus for that purpose, but my heart failed me when I got as far as the Angel, and there I got down and took my way through Goswell Street, thinking there might possibly be pudding clubs in that neighbourhood. And so there were, half a dozen of them, as was to be seen by the placards in the windows. But here my satisfaction ended. You could not, unless you went right into the crowded shop, and mixed with the customers, tell which were ready-money ones and which were club members. I was a little disappointed at this; but when I reflected what a proud person poor mother was, and that she would be the last person to like the public at large to know of her secret, it certainly seemed quite as well as it was.

railings, like the Peri at the gate of Paradise, I could not help recalling, with somewhat of a morbid pleasure, the history of my dull, uneventful life; and thinking, with a self-mocking smile, not unmixed with a few irrepressible self-pitying tears, of the hard fate which had made me through life such a poor miserable outsider.

Yes, that's exactly what I was, and am,—an outsider, a rank outsider; such an outsider that the utmost powers of the numeration-table are inadequate to express the odds against me on any conceivable event! I have been an outsider from my birth, which most useless and uncalled-for affair took place at Berwick-on-Tweed, on the twenty-ninth of February—a day which, three times out of the four, is shut out of the year altogether. I was one of a brace of twins, the first-born of our parents, who had married on the principle that two negatives make an affirmative, and that therefore, they, whose incomes were both of the negative sort, would be able to get on very well by putting them together. If my brother had come into the world alone, it would not have been so much to grumble about, but I was one too many; and my mother, not being strong, could not manage us both; so my brother was kept at home, while I was put out to nurse. Perhaps this was, after all, not a bad arrangement for me, supposing I had any business in the world at all; for my mother and brother were soon both in their graves, while I grew up a strong healthy child, with wonderful lungs and appetite. Indeed, my nurse has since told me that I was a 'regular out-and-outer to stuff and to roar.' Soon my father married again, and had a large family by his second wife; so it is scarcely necessary to say how literally I was an outsider, as far as the paternal home was concerned, ever after.

At an early age I was sent to school in one of the Channel Islands; but my bills not being paid with anything like regularity, I was always out of favour with the masters; and being constantly out at elbows, and out of pocket-money, I was

pretty nearly sent to Coventry by the boys, who never admitted me to any of their sports, except cricket, where I was always put to flag out as long stop, with a kick for every ball I let go past me. I scarcely ever got an innings; and if I did, I was invariably out in some mysterious manner, at the very first ball. It may be supposed that my school-life was not a very happy one, and I was not sorry when I was removed, and placed in a merchant's counting-house; but I did not learn much of the system of commercial transactions, for nobody took the trouble to teach me anything; and I was only stuck in an outside office just to answer a question, and occasionally to step out on an errand. An old uncle of my mother's, however, took pity on me, and sent me to a private tutor, and afterwards to college; but he died before I had been there long, and, no more funds being forthcoming, I had to leave without taking a degree. Of course it was found that I had been left altogether out of his will.

Since that time I have been constantly buzzing about, like a fly knocking its head against a window-pane (except that the fly is generally inside), for ever trying to get into some charmed circle or other, but always without success. Recently, however, I did find what I fancied was a bit of an opening. I got an engagement as a commercial traveller to solicit orders for an article of universal domestic consumption. Now, I thought, I was all right. 'An article of universal domestic consumption!' Nothing outsidied about that, at all events. But alas! I soon found that I was an outsider, travelling for a firm of outsiders; and that, though I did profess to sell an article of universal domestic consumption, the great firm of Messrs. Gog and Magog of Gresham Street was in the same line: and they were the original manufacturers of the article, and their name was up for it, and they could sell it as cheaply as I could, and people wouldn't have it unless it bore Messrs. Gog and Magog's mark, to counterfeit which was forgery: and Mr. Magog himself took the same

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ground that I did, having at his command an unlimited amount of travelling expenses, and had done so for twenty years; and he was intimate with the customers, and brought presents to their wives, and knew the names of all their children, and stood godfather to their babies, and had the customers to the hotel to drink port wine and brandy and water with him, regardless of expense or his apoplectic tendencies: while poor I could seldom penetrate beyond the clerk or shopman; and when I did, the most civil reply that I got was, that they were really very well served, and were not likely to change. And Mr. Magog ignored me in public, and ridiculed me in the commercial room when I was absent, and withered me when I was present, and, in point of fact, shut me up altogether. To be sure, my commercial career may be considered a success in one way of looking at it, for as I took no orders, I made no bad debts; but my employers didn't seem to see it; and when I returned to town, I got an intimation that I must 'put the screw on a little more,' or look out for another situation. Such were my worldly position and prospects on the night when I stood in moody meditation outside those iron area railings.

But it was socially that the shoe pinched most. I was friendly enough with plenty of fellows when I met them in the street; but somehow nobody with any womankind belonging to him ever invited me to his house. And yet there was nothing disreputable about me, upon my honour! only outsidedness—nothing more! And if I dined frugally I always took care to have good coats to wear—or at all events, I always paid the outside price for them. I had a susceptible, loving heart too, ready and longing to fall in love with some pretty and amiable girl; but none such had I among my acquaintance, from whom I could beg the acceptance of such a trifle. Best so, the reader may say, under the circumstances; but after all, it was hard to stroll in moody solitude about Bushy Park or Kew Gardens, or through some green

country lane, and watch the tantalizing bits of love-making that are for ever and ever going on:—bitter, too, to stand thus in the cold street, listening to sweet voices blending in the song within, to hear the merry ringing laugh which indicates blind-man's-buff, and, above all, to watch that graceful shadow with the long thick ringlets, as it flitted quickly across the blind. Ah! what rapture would it have been to have felt the slightest touch of those gaily tossing curls! to have clasped, but for one moment, that slender waist! to have warmed my chilled heart in the fire of those bright eyes which were hidden from my gaze! to have—

I suppose I must have been speaking my thoughts aloud, for here I felt a slap on the back which caused me to start so as nearly to impale my chin on the spear-headed railing; and turning around, I saw my old friend Boulter, the artist.

'Halloa, Mackintosh, my boy!' he said, 'what was that I heard about slender waists, and lovely ringlets, and the fire of bright eyes? Whom are you speaking about, eh?'

'Well, to tell the truth,' I replied, 'I was lamenting my sad fate in being such a poor forlorn outsider; and thinking how much I should like to know that lovely girl whose shadow you see on the blind there. I have never seen more of her than that shadow, and yet I declare I am half in love with her already.'

'By Jove!' cried Boulter, 'Mackintosh is in love with the shadow of Miss Skinner! Well, that is a good one! I positively shouldn't have believed that Miss Skinner could have cast a shadow! Slender waist? I should think so! Why she's nothing but skin and bone: not an ounce of flesh about her. Fact, if I know anything of the human figure. Ringlets? Ah, they are beauties! Redder than carrots, my boy, redder than cochineal, redder than prawns from the Red Sea! True, as I'm a colorist. Fire of her eyes? Now listen, Mackintosh! The lines of fire of her two eyes converge at a point exactly ten and decimal three-seven inches in front of her nose. I have calculated the angle, and can speak

to a nicety. Exactly ten and decimal three-seven inches, if I'm a mathematician and know anything of perspective. Never saw such a squint in my life. But come along. Don't stand mooning here! I've a snug little party spending Christmas Eve in my studio over the way. All outsiders like yourself, every one. Join us,—you'll be quite at home. Just now they're having a rubber. I've come out on an expedition in search of beer; and, with some difficulty, have just succeeded in despatching a couple of pots in the right direction. By the way, you don't happen to have credit at any of the public about here, do you? No? Then *have* you got such a thing as a crown that you don't particularly want for a day or two? It shall be most religiously returned. Thank you, my boy—you're a brick! Now that coin is worth a fabulous amount at this present crisis. Just follow me for a moment.'

And we stepped into the 'Feathers' public-house at the corner.

'Now, sir,' said Boulter to the barman, 'oblige me by rubbing out that trifling score on the slate, and sending over two pots of Cooper to my rooms every twenty minutes until ten forty. At that time precisely you will substitute egg-flip for Cooper, and continue sending until further orders. Come along, Mackintosh.'

We crossed the street, entered a rather dingy door, ascended a very dingy staircase, and passed along a dark passage to a room at the back of the house, whence proceeded an exceedingly strong smell of tobacco-smoke.

'By Jingo!' cried Boulter, 'ain't they punishing my Cavendish!' and, throwing open the door, he spouted—

'I knew by the smoke that so gracefully curled
O'er the bowls of the pipes, that some baccy
was near;

And I said, "If there's beer to be found in this
world,

The soul that is thirsty may hope for it here."

'Gentlemen, allow me to introduce my friend Mackintosh, an outsider like ourselves. Mackintosh, I told you that we were all outsiders, and you shall judge whether I spoke the

truth. This gentleman on the box-seat is Clogg, the dramatic author. Perhaps his name is not familiar to your ears? I suppose not. He has written a play which has been sent to every theatre in London, and has come back from all, looking on each return more dirty, dogs-eared, beaten, and hopeless than before. The number of hours he has spent in hanging about the various stage-doors is something wonderful. I believe he has never been able to see any of the managers, but he could tell you to a nicety which of the stage-door keepers likes his half-a-go of gin hot, which prefers it cold, and which takes it neat. His partner is Scraper, an actor. He says he has achieved a success in the provinces, but somehow he cannot get an engagement in London. His acquaintance with stage-doors is nearly equal to that of Clogg, and it was at one of those gorgeous saloons that the two met, swore a friendship, and sealed it in beer at the neighbouring bar. That meeting, sir, will, at some exceedingly remote period, be a subject for a great historical picture. This gentleman is Tom Peel, who writes for the magazines. Yes, that is correct, as far as his intentions are concerned. He writes for them, but unfortunately they won't print for him. He could tell you which of them returns manuscripts with a polite intimation that they are not suited to the speciality of the magazine, which more coldly and briefly signifies that they are "declined with thanks," and which still more coldly gives the undesired information that they are left at the office to be called for. But as to their method of sending proofs or paying for accepted contributions he cannot say a word. This other gentleman is Barker, a surgeon, who has been out two or three times to the Antipodes as a ship's doctor, but who has never had a patient here, except Clogg, for whom he once pulled out a tooth, an exploit for which he has never been paid to the present day. Myself you know. I am a painter who have never sold a picture, and to whom the Hanging Committee, out of sheer envy, always refuses a place in the Academy. Now you know us all.

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No, stay! there's Nigger, Peel's dog. The poor brute has neither scent, speed, nor teeth; he has no idea of a gun, and does not know a fox from a sheep. He has a horror of the water, and sleeps all night with the sound repose conferred by a good conscience. Too big for a drawing-room, and too hungry for a kitchen, among us alone is he admitted. We all have a fellow-feeling for him, and he is, in fact, one of us. Now then you know us all. The supply of beer is provided for, and baccy is here in abundance. What more can man desire, in a jovial point of view? Nothing. Drink, then, smoke, and be jolly.'

So Boulter and I looked on for a time whilst the others played their rubber, which was nominally for twenty-guinea points, and which seemed to cause quite as much interest as if it had been really for those heavy stakes. After the cards we talked, and laughed, and sang, and made speeches, wherein we chaffed and glorified each other amazingly, and spoke in the most disparaging way possible of all persons who had been successful in any pursuit, proving to our own satisfaction that success was almost invariably the effect of impudence and ignorance combined. How Boulter pulled to pieces the pictures of the year! How severe Clogg was on that trashy piece which was having such a run at the Theatre Royal So-and-so! How Scraper laughed at the pronunciation of this supposed great actor and mimicked the ranting of that! How sarcastic Peel was on the exceeding mildness of one magazine and the pointless tales in the other! What good stories Barker told us of the gross ignorance of some eminent surgeons whom the deluded world, as usual, would obstinately believe in! How I made my friends laugh by giving some instances of Mr. Magog's contempt of grammar and exceeding fondness for aspirating his vowels; and how poor Nigger gave short barks in his sleep, dreaming, probably, that he saw some unworthy but lucky dog unjustly possessed of a bone! Then, too, we made the most slashing jokes about muslins and laces, and

mistletoes and light fantastic toes, and the absurdities of female society generally; and vowed that the rich colour spreading on the meerschaum bowl was far lovelier in our eyes than the blush mantling on the cheek of woman. Boulter was especially great at this, and I almost feel inclined to regret that want of space, and want of power to remember the point of his jokes, prevent my giving here some of those brilliant but severe witticisms. We sneered at cigars, too, as unworthy of men, and vowed that the finest wines were not to be compared to a draught of beer from the honest pewter. Well, it was a jolly evening I must say, and to me, perhaps, especially so. I forgot my outsideness—or rather, for the time, I gloried in it—and when, at twelve o'clock, we shook hands all around, wishing each other a merry Christmas and a happy new year, I had but one regret, which was that I had to leave town in a day or two on one of my hopeless journeys, and that I should not meet my friends again for some months. As we said good-night, I discovered that I had lost my purse, but as it contained but a couple of shillings this did not much matter. We fancied that I might have dropped it as I was giving Boulter the crown piece, and we went over the way to look for it, but nothing could be seen. Boulter said it might have fallen down the area, and promised that he would look for it in the morning. And so we parted.

On the next day but one Boulter sent to me the five shillings which he had borrowed, and the purse with its contents, which he had found; and on the next day to this I left London to call on all the shopkeepers in the general line throughout the north of England, Scotland, and the midland counties. This occupied me many months, and when I returned—but now I come to the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

I divide this short narrative into two chapters because the division assists the mind in passing over an interval of time. If the reader is in

the habit of attending the theatres he is accustomed to leaping over twenty years or so between the acts, therefore it is to be hoped that a little hop of a few months won't trouble him much.

When I came back from this journey I found myself in greater disgrace than ever. The head of the firm told me that I didn't seem to be a 'pushing man,' and that I hadn't put on the screw as desired; thereupon we joined issue and had a row, which ended by my taking a leaf from the book of Coriolanus and dismissing my employers then and there.

With a heart longing for sympathy and for such an evening as the last, I went away to Boulter's, fancying, I believe, that I was going to meet the same jovial fellows as before, and that in their society my heart would be again lightened of its burden. Scenes where we have spent happy hours are deeply impressed upon our minds. No other aspect seems possible for them, and we go to them again expecting to find everything unchanged. Who has ever so found it? Reason is not to be blamed in this, for we don't trouble it in the matter at all. The picture is in our minds, and there we are content to let it stay.

When I got to Boulter's door I found a cab waiting outside, and just as I was going to knock, the door was opened and Boulter himself came forth. Yes, it was Boulter, but, oh, how changed! His formerly somewhat rough-and-ready costume had made way for what was really a display of high art on the part of some gifted tailor; his hat and boots were the perfection of glossiness; his hands had been dyed a delicate lemon colour, or else he wore gloves which fitted him like his very skin; his beard and moustache were so trimmed that not a hair could complain of being unjustly overlooked; and as he moved he did not taint the atmosphere with odours of beer, but, on the contrary, his presence gently diffused through the circumambient air a delicate and ineffable perfume.

I was so astonished that I stood staring and speechless; but Boulter

appeared glad to see me, notwithstanding his metamorphosis, and said in his own cheery voice—

'How dy'e do, Mackintosh? I'm glad to see you. So you've got back at last. I'm really sorry I can't stop with you now, but I have an engagement. I'm going to escort two ladies to the Opera, and time's up.'

'Two ladies to the Opera? Heavens, Boulter! what horrid change has come over you? You going to the Opera with ladies!'

'Well, the fact is,' said he, 'that I'm going to be married to one of them; and I believe I may say that next Monday will see me the happiest of men.'

'Married? and to whom then?'

'To a young lady of the name of Skinner, who used to live with her uncle nearly opposite. By the way, it was outside their house that I met you last Christmas Eve.'

'What!' I blundered out in my astonishment, 'Miss Skinner! The young lady whose shadow (was on the blind? Why you told me she was nothing but skin and bone!'

'Nonsense, Mackintosh, I never could have said that.'

'You did though.'

'Well, I had been studying anatomy a good deal about that time—I suppose that accounts for it; but she has a charming girlish figure, rather slim and slender I admit, but not too much so for my taste. Besides, she has filled out considerably since then. Really she is a most lovely girl. Mackintosh, you never saw such beautiful hair in your life.'

'Why you told me it was red!'

'Auburn.'

'Red.'

'Auburn.'

'Redder, you said, than carrots, redder than cochineal, redder than prawns from the Red Sea!'

'Bless me! Could I have said so? I remember I was painting my picture with that fine sunset effect just then. Perhaps my eyes were dazzled. But at any rate, her hair is the most glorious auburn—the very colour for a painter's dream. But even if it had been red, you would forget it on seeing her eyes. Oh, Mackintosh, my boy, such eyes! such magnificent eyes!'

'The lines of fire of her two eyes converge at a point exactly ten and decimal three-seven inches in front of her nose. You said so.'

'Feet, I said.'

'Inches.'

'Feet.'

'Inches.'

'Well then, it should be feet. Besides, I found out afterwards that in my calculations I had made the trivial error of misplacing the decimal point, and that the point of convergence was a hundred and three feet from her nose, not ten feet, or inches as you say. Such an angle as that is of course quite inappreciable. Besides, Mackintosh, she has eight thousand pounds of her own; what do you think of that? Not that it makes the slightest difference to my feelings, you know, not the least in the world, but one can't ignore the fact.'

'Eight thousand pounds! I congratulate you, Boulter.'

'Yes; and my acquaintance with her has been advantageous to me in another way. Her uncle turned out to be quite a connoisseur in painting. He saw my pictures and had the good taste to appreciate them, introduced me to several rich patrons of art, and now I have more commissions than I can find time to execute.'

'How fortunate! I am really very glad to hear it.' I said this honestly, but still with some little regret. Boulter, I saw, had slipped through my fingers, but I thought of our other friends, and said—

'And how about Clogg and the rest? *In statu quo*, I suppose?'

'Why, not exactly. It's a most remarkable affair altogether. When things began to move on with us they kept it up. Some time ago I became acquainted with the manager of one of the leading theatres by means of selling him a little picture. I introduced Clogg to him. He gave Clogg a suggestion for a drama: Clogg wrote it, and it was brought out at the theatre with unbounded success. There's a sensation scene in it which draws all London. Clogg, sir, is on the high road to wealth and fame. More than that, he put a character into the piece exactly

suited to Scrapper, and stipulated that Scrapper should play it. Scrapper made a wonderful hit, and will one day be at the top of his profession. Mixing up a good deal now with literary men, Clogg and Scrapper interceded for Peel with the editor of a magazine, who now takes all Peel's articles and pays him pretty well for them. Having begun with one, he soon got admission to two or three more, and is now doing well; and Nigger knows what dinner means.'

'And what of Barker?'

'Barker is no exception to the general rule. Having nothing else to do he accompanied me in a cab one day to Lord Entor's house with a picture I was taking there. Just as we got to the gate his lordship's carriage was coming out. The horses took fright at something, and the old coachman was thrown off and had his leg broken. As he had been in the family all his life, and was a great favourite, his lordship would not have him taken to the hospital, but had him back in the house. Barker was on the spot; Barker set the bone; and his skill and attention made such a wonderful cure, that the old fellow can walk now better than ever he could in his life before. The wildest dreams of his youth had never imagined such a leg as he has got now! He is thinking seriously of breaking the other also, and getting Barker to mend it. Lord Entor was so pleased that he took a deal of notice of Barker, introduced him everywhere, and laid the foundation of a practice that will soon be a very lucrative one.'

'Well, it is wonderful! But how did you become engaged to Miss Skinner?'

'Why it was all owing to you, now I think of it. Don't you know you lost your purse down the area? Well, I went there in the morning to look for it. As it happened, Miss Skinner was there when I knocked. We searched together and found—not only your purse but the happiness of our lives! Nice sentiment that, isn't it?'

'So it was all owing to me, then, after all!'

'All owing to you, my boy. But

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The Oxford for Wives: A Story of London Life

THE MERCHANT PRINCE OF LONDON

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A LIFE OF FLOWERS: A PICTURE FOR CHRISTMAS MEDITATION.

Drawn by M. Ellen Edwards.

[See the Poem.]

XUM

how are *you* getting on? Well, I hope. No? What a pity you were not here to share in our good luck! Never mind, yours will come some day. But good-bye! my time is up. Call on us when we come back from Switzerland. Peel can give you the address. No cards, you know. Good evening!"

And he drove off. I was not envious of my friends' good fortune, but I felt abandoned. One short anecdote and I have done. One day, some years ago, I went with a party of friends to catch an excursion train for which we had purchased tickets on the day before. Being late, we found the doors of the station closed,

but by a bribe (from my pocket) they were opened to us just as the train was moving off. We all made a rush to get in, and my friends succeeded, but the carriage that I selected was locked, and the train moved off leaving me alone on the platform.

As were my feelings then, so were they, though more intense, after my interview with Boulter. As a relief I went to my humble abode and penned this brief narrative. Should it ever meet a reader's eye, that reader, if benevolent, will rejoice, for he will know that things have taken a turn with me, and that I have at last been admitted somewhere!

A LIFE OF FLOWERS.

A PLEA FOR CHRISTMAS MEDITATION.

'There's rue for you; and here's some for me . . . You may wear your rue with a difference.'—*Hamlet*.

SEE—on the cold damp flags,
Wherever my lady flits—
A flower-girl, huddled up in her rags,
Fallen asleep where she sits!
Well may your ladyship stop,
The sight has a wild, weird charm—
Look in the basket ready to drop
Down from the listless arm.
Violets—under the gas!—
Faded, flaccid, and dead,
O'erblown roses waning,—alas!
Lilies hanging the head;—
Seeming meet types of her face,
Haggard with hunger and care;
Just the wrecks of girlhood and grace
Drifting—who can tell where?
Worn with the weary walking of hours,
Penniless pitiful slave,
See—she sleeps, unconscious of flowers,
As if they grew over her grave!
There—in the cold and damp,
There—in the drizzle and blast,
What does she care for the flare of the lamp?
Is it not rest—come at last!
If it were only so deep,
Hunger disturbed not its dreams!
Over her there in her sleep,
See, as the sickly light gleams,
Hollow and pallid her cheek—
Hers, who lies starkly below:
But round, rosy-tinted, and sleek,
Hers—gazing down on her now!

Near ;—yet how far apart !
 View them, oh, pitying Powers,—
 Each with her tender woman's heart—
 Each with her life of flowers :—
 Flowers—strewn in one's happy path,
 Garlands for waist and for head :—
 Tell me what to the other, I pray !
 Things not for beauty but bread !

Flowers, that the poets have sung,
 Flowers, that the west wind has wooed,
 Flowers that the bees have been busy among,
 Hummed round, and hymned-to, and sued,—
 Flowers—e'en those commonest sweets
 Nature to earth does entrust !
 Yet—to this hapless waif of the streets,
 Meaning simply—a crust !

Well, you may snatch back your dress,
 Lady, lest contact defile,
 Yet may the heavens your loveliness bless,
 Just for that womanly smile :
 Sorrowful ! Go—get you in,
 Sit down and sigh for despair :
 What can we do for a world full of sin,
 Suffering, sorrow, and care !

Under the flaring lamp,
 Out in the midnight street,
 Where the air is stilly, chilly, and damp,
 Look at the two, how they meet !
 How many meet so—and part—
 Here in this world of ours,
 Each with her tender woman's heart,
 Each with her life of flowers ?

T. H.

CHRISTMAS IN BELGRAVIA ;

OR,

Miss Lumley's Christmas Gift.

IT was Christmas Eve, and the weather was as perversely unseasonable as it has often chosen to be, of late years. The day was sunless and breezeless—chilly, but not cold—close, yet not warm. London looked dismal indeed, in an atmosphere of smoky fog—not dense enough to be exciting—through which, muddy pavements, dingy houses, and ill-clad people looked specially muddy, dingy, and wretched.

In the principal thoroughfares, however, the passengers were chiefly well-dressed, and the shop-windows did their best to enliven the gloom,

and looked attractively gay in spite of unfavourable atmospheric conditions. The drapers' show of silks and shawls made quite a blaze of colour every here and there ; and the jewellers had set forth an endless variety of ornaments—glowing gold cunningly wrought into divers fashions of chain, and clasp, and pendant, for fair arms, and necks, and brows. Not for a moment to be ignored, either, were the other sort of 'toy-shops.' These shops might well be the species of terrestrial paradise they evidently were to multitudes of eager little investigators who crowded round to view the out-

side show, or happier still, thronged the interior of the bewilderingly blissful emporium.

Truly, one might almost have forgotten the ungenial influences of the London weather while 'looking at the shops' on that December afternoon. Though you were not allowed to forget the season either, while you did so; for almost in every window might be seen placards, more or less obtrusive or insinuating, bearing the same burden—

Christmas and New-Year's Gifts.

Some one met Miss Lumley just as she was coming out of one of the furniture and upholstery warehouses, and was about to pass to the neat little brougham which awaited her across the pavement.

'Have you been choosing Christmas presents?' says to Miss Lumley the casually-encountered acquaintance, a beaming-faced young matron, with a rosy-cheeked, scarlet-cloaked little girl on either hand, whose four little hands, in turn, were laden with significant packages. 'That seems to be every one's business to-day. We have had such an afternoon of shops, and bazaars, and German fairs! Haven't we, Effie? Show Miss Lumley the beautiful horse you have bought with your own money for little brother Dora.'

Miss Lumley, however, appeared to be but slightly interested in the proposed exhibition, and without taking any notice of the question put to herself, rejoined by asking another.

'Do you think —'s carpets are to be depended on as much as —'s? I've just seen one I like at —'s, but I can't make up my mind that the establishment is to be thoroughly relied on.'

'I believe it is, so far as durability goes. Their patterns are not thought so good, you know.'

'Oh—their patterns are not thought so good!' repeated Miss Lumley, with attentive gravity. And quite a careworn look came into her face as she paused, evidently in perplexed consideration.

'But if you've seen what you like—' suggested the other lady, and then broke away with 'Dora! Effie! There's the Waterloo omnibus!

We must run after it. Excuse—Good-bye! Good afternoon, Miss Lumley!'

And away flew the bright-faced young mother, close followed by her two darlings, while Miss Lumley entered the well-lined, softly-cushioned little coach wherein she was the only passenger, shut the door for herself, and after a pause of frowning consideration, called to her coachman to 'drive slowly up Regent Street till she pulled the check-string.'

That evening, 'when the children were asleep,' and the bright-faced little matron was working beside her husband,—the curtains drawn, lamp shining bright, books and work and pictures and open piano and one or two stray toys and dolls on the table and floor—all looking infinitely cheery and homelike,—she interpolated her narrative of all they had been doing that day, with an allusion to their encounter with Miss Lumley.

'And you know, as I thought to myself afterwards,' she concluded, 'I dare say she was not buying presents after all; but only choosing a new carpet for her drawing-room, poor thing!'

The husband laughed, and thought her compassion for the lady under these circumstances approached the sublime.

'For my part, my dear Sophy, I believe you felt inclined to envy your "poor" Miss Lumley, when you realized the business she was engaged on. The carpet warehouses of London all before her, where to choose! And heaps of cash in her pocket, and a carriage to go about in, and a sweet house in Belgravia, and bonnets and mantles and gowns, as many as she likes. Happy Miss Lumley!'

But Sophy would not laugh.

'No, I don't undervalue the advantages of "cash," as you know; but I always feel sorry, somehow, for Jane Lumley,' she averred.

'I observe you always incline to bestow much patronizing pity on your unmarried friends, both male and female. Don't apologize; I accept it as a compliment.'

'I assure you I'm very sorry for some of the married ones, too,' said

the little wife, saucily nodding her head. 'It doesn't follow that people are to be happy because they have husbands or wives; or that they need be miserable because they haven't. Of course not. But I always have been sorry for Jane Lumley, and I always shall be, I suppose. It isn't as if she had people belonging to her, or any very dear friends, as most women have. She seems to have no one who cares particularly about her, and no one that she cares particularly about—which is worse still. And so at Christmas time she goes about the shops by herself, choosing a new carpet for herself, to be put down in a room that she'll sit in by herself. Oh, it's dreadful!'

'Still, she has plenty of money. Don't forget that, practical little woman! Isn't money the key to four-fifths of this world's happiness?'

'But where's the use of a key if you have no lock to put it in? And that's just her case, I believe. Her money makes the matter worse instead of better, it seems to me. If I *must* live alone in the world, I think I should like to be poor, and always in difficulties. It would be some interest in life, at any rate; and besides, it would be a consolation when things were *very* miserable, that no one had to suffer except oneself.'

'I see. I can feebly imagine you in the character of that lonely, loveless struggler with the world. And perhaps *you* might be susceptible of consolation from the fact of your poverty; but I doubt very much if Miss Lumley would like to try the experiment, and part with her property in the Three per Cents. accordingly. Shall you make the suggestion to her?'

'You may laugh, but I willingly would! I mean, I could often find it in my heart to suggest that she should part with *some* of her Three per Cents., at least, to bestow them where they are more needed.'

'Give them to the poor, I suppose you mean?'

'Yes; to the poor indeed; to the poor sister the family never took any notice of after her marriage,

twelve years ago. Don't you remember, just before we were engaged, the talk there was about pretty Henrietta Lumley, who "made such a bad marriage," all her friends said?'

'I remember nothing that took place at the period you name, my love—nothing whatever! It was a blank and uninteresting portion of my life, during which I was utterly engrossed in business, no doubt.'

'Do be serious! I want to tell you about Henrietta Lumley.'

'By all means. I think I recall something of it now. She married a country tradesman, didn't she? and unpardonably outraged the gentility of her family thereby.'

'That was it. He was a worthy, well-educated young man; but the Lumleys thought so much about position, and family, and such things. They opposed the engagement; and it was only kept up in a sort of half-acknowledged way for years and years, till at last poor Hetta couldn't bear it any longer. He had a severe illness—Mr. Gray, her lover had—and he nearly died; and she was never allowed to see him—hardly to hear about him—and she *couldn't* bear it. And at last she married him, against the wishes of her family, and was tabooed accordingly. And I don't wonder at it—I mean at her marrying—I really don't. She waited six years in hopes they'd relent—and—and, I think—don't *you* think—she was right?'

'If I say yes, mind you never let Effie and Dora hear of it. I don't wish them to marry provincial grocers, you know.'

'Grocers! Charles Gray wasn't a grocer; he was a bookseller.'

'I beg his pardon. Still, I would rather my daughters did not wed even into eminent firms such as Longman's and Murray's rolled into one, for instance,—without their papa's consent. A father's consent is a solemn thing, you see; and in the case of Effie and Dora I am not sure I should consider a marriage legal that was solemnized without it.'

'Ah! but you'd never be so un-

reasonable as poor Hetty's father was! And after all, it was her sisters influenced him. He forgave her before he died; but they still protested, and would never visit her, or take any notice of her. And then, poor thing, trouble came on her. Her husband fell into ill health, and couldn't stay in England; and with the money that came to her at Mr. Lumley's death they emigrated to New Zealand. And they didn't succeed. And, oh! I believe they have had sad trials there. And goodness knows what has become of them now. For years I've hardly heard anything about them.'

'They are flourishing farmers, depend on it, by this time, making huge fortunes by sheep-feeding or corn-growing.'

'No; that's impossible; Mr. Gray's health hindered him from taking to anything of the kind. And I know they were in great distress a year ago, for want of money. And mamma spoke to Miss Lumley about it, who would not hear her to the end. It almost makes one hate her; only the next minute one feels sorry too, for the miserable, hardhearted, lonely, loveless old woman.'

'Old woman! She'd agree to all your epithets sooner than to the last, I expect. No, no! I protest against this evil speaking of poor Miss Lumley. A callous, cruel, hard, cold, wicked woman she may be, but not—not an old woman!'

'Well; she's getting old, then. Twelve years ago she was nearly forty. She was the eldest of the three sisters; and Clarissa, who died five years ago, was forty-one. Jane must be past fifty by this time; and that's not young, now, is it?'

'I'll ask you the same question, let me see, eighteen—twenty years hence, and hear what you make of it then. In such a solemn matter as that of her age, every woman should have the privilege of being tried by her peers. I won't hear your verdict on the matter.'

And as the husband resolutely declined to proceed in any more serious strain, the wife did not further pur-

sue the subject of Miss Lumley on this occasion.

Meanwhile, Miss Lumley was also spending her Christmas Eve by her 'ain fireside.' A very different affair was the 'interior' to which we now direct our attention, however, from that we have just left. Howard Street, Belgravia, is one of those rows of small houses benignantly built within the charmed circle of an aristocratic neighbourhood. It is within a stone's throw of Belgrave Square itself, and some of the palatial chimneys of Grosvenor Place can even be seen by an adroit contortion of the neck out of the second-floor front windows. Considerate, benevolent builders, to provide accommodation for small but genteel families in such a classic locality as this! True—but that is just because the ground is so precious here—the rooms and passages and staircases of these dwellings are of the smallest, narrowest, cramped proportions. True, for the same rental, in a district even healthier and pleasanter (judging from a carnal and common point of view) than this, a house might be had with spacious chambers, lofty ceilings, broad corridors, and similar material advantages. But what a lofty superiority to such mean considerations of temporal comfort and convenience is shown by this choice of an abode, not for *what* it is, but *where* it is! To live in the odour of gentility and fashion! Here is a noble aspiration, which in these days is by some of us obeyed and followed at no matter what personal sacrifice. Let no one say that the era of voluntary martyrdom is past, while examples like this meet us at every turn.

The Lumleys had always been among these examples of people who scorn such mundane matters as comfort, convenience, or the like, while aspiring to be fashionable, and to be thought aristocratic. And not only did this theory of life influence their choice of an abode, but they carried it out in yet graver and more important directions. From small details of their domestic economy, all arranged sub-

ject to the same guiding rule, up to the most vital interests of their friendships and alliances, everything was made subservient to this grand principle. If 'gentility' were really a religion, how earnestly religious some people would be! The Lumleys, for instance, who so disinterestedly practised the faith they held; whose lives were a standing protest against utilitarian doctrines; who were ready at all times to abjure everything they most desired, from the merest present enjoyment up to the dearest happiness of the future, if it clashed with those higher interests they maintained so rigorously. 'Gentility is better than happiness' was the motto which they tacitly impressed on all belonging to them. And for the most part, they were highly consistent followers of that creed.

As, for instance, when some fluctuation in the funds (through which irreproachable medium came the Lumley income) caused, for a year or two, a diminution of the family finances, they cheerfully made themselves ill by staying in town throughout the summer, because they could not afford to go on the Continent, or to Wales, or Scotland, or the lakes, or Devonshire, or anywhere else that was *en règle* for Belgravians; and of course places more within reach, but less indubitably 'the thing,' were not to be thought of for a moment. Even in those early days, poor little Hetta had infinitely shocked her family by suggesting a sojourn at Margate or Southend, as better than staying on in choky, dusty, smoky, summer London.

But Hetta was continually offending in similar ways. She was the youngest of the family, and during some years had lost the advantage of Howard Street influences, having been placed, for her health, with an aunt in the country, who although she was, as the widow of a clergyman, a most unexceptionable connection, unhappily proved to be 'not so particular as we could wish,' the Lumleys said, with regard to her social circle and visiting list.

In fact, it was in Northamptonshire that Hetta became acquainted

with Charles Gray. If it hadn't been for Aunt Mellor's unfortunate laxity about knowing people—the orthodox members of the family often observed—that piece of mischief wouldn't have been done. When Aunt Mellor died, they fondly hoped the mischief would die with her, but it did not. Hetta clung to her first and last love as tenaciously as they did to their 'principles of what was due to their family and position.' And we know the ultimate result of this obstinate adherence, on both sides, to what each party considered the most important interests of life.

How different was the conduct of Henrietta's two sisters! They must have gladdened their parents' hearts by the unflinching integrity with which they maintained the family principles at any cost. Clarissa Lumley, every one knew, had two or three 'disappointments.' Her first suitor, urged by herself and her family, abandoned his moderate prospects in England for a money-making position in India, and died within the first six months of his exile. Two years afterwards, she became engaged to an officer in the army, their marriage being only postponed till he should obtain his company. A Lumley could not possibly marry below the rank of captain. But before that necessary step was attained, the regiment was ordered to Malta, and at Malta the faithless lieutenant became captivated by a rich young widow, who married him at once without waiting for the dilatory operations of the War Office. After that—but there is no need to dwell further on the history of Clarissa's matrimonial prospects, each of which in turn was ruthlessly sacrificed in heroic obedience to the guiding principle of the family life, until, after remaining a handsome young woman as long as she possibly could, she sunk into a plain and rather disagreeable old maid, as which she died some years since.

Perhaps the eldest Miss Lumley's case, however, was the hardest of all. She had never been remarkable for good looks, and throughout her life had only one lover, but

he was very steadfast and sincere. And even her own family would admit to one another that 'poor Jane really liked Mr. Weston.' He had 'liked' her from the early days of youth, when he first came to be one of the curates of the parish, and met her in the course of his district-visiting. And after some years' patient attachment, he had 'spoken.' But alas! not only was that worthy young man, though a clergyman, not of unimpeachable gentility as to his relations, but he had nothing in the world but his curacy to live on. A good living, it was understood, would have reconciled the family to the fact of his father having been in business, and his uncle being there still; but small means and questionable connections, both together, could not be condoned. Twice did Mr. Weston ask the fateful question. The second time was when he had just received the presentation to a small living in Herefordshire—a house, and orchard, and three hundred a year.

'I would try to make you happy, and I think I could, even on *that*,' urged the lover, looking into her eyes for a responsive gleam of tenderness.

Now Jane certainly 'liked' him, and still more certainly he was the only person who had ever seriously liked her. And this mutual liking had been going on now for seven or eight years. Grey streaks were apparent in the brown hair of the hard-working curate, and Jane herself had left her thirtieth birthday considerably behind her. Nevertheless, with sublime heroism, she turned her eyes away from meeting his, and told him that it couldn't be, they mustn't think of it. Later on, she went a little more into particulars, and said she couldn't reconcile it with her duty to her family to marry under the circumstances.

'*The circumstances!*' echoed her suitor, rather bitterly; 'you mean the three hundred a year, I suppose? It is a small income, but how many families there are living happily on quite as little.'

'Not in *our* sphere—you must be aware of that,' Miss Lumley replied,

with some dignity. 'Everything depends on the circle in which one has been accustomed to move. One must bear *that* in mind. Something must be sacrificed, if necessary, to *that*.'

'And you are ready to sacrifice to it my happiness and your own?—for I *know* I could make you happy, Jane, happier than this way of life you think so much of can ever make you. Think a little before you send me away. If you give me up for no other reason than this,' pursued the steadfast, patient man, at length aroused into something like resistance and indignation, 'I shall know what to understand, and I will never trouble you any more.'

The new rector went away in angry disappointment, and within six months married some one who evinced considerable partiality for himself and entire contentment with his circumstances. She made him what is called 'a good wife,' and he was always what is called 'an excellent husband.' But for all that, those who knew him best, always felt regretfully that something was wanting—that he never fulfilled the sturdy promise of his zealous, unmarried days. He dropped into a routine existence in his out-of-the-way country parish, fulfilling his duties in a sufficiently exemplary way to all casual observation—visiting the poor, reading to the sick, and preaching two orthodox sermons, twenty minutes long, every Sunday. And he appreciated his home, was kind to his wife, and fond of his children;—but he became middle-aged and then elderly, wonderfully soon, and a certain dried-up element rapidly developed and became manifest in his appearance and manner, his feelings and modes of thought.

While Jane Lumley sits, as her young married friend had pitifully said, 'by herself' on this evening, when social kindness and rejoicing should surely be regnant throughout Christendom,—and ponders on the new carpet she has promised herself for a Christmas present. No one else is likely to give her anything, and—at least so people say—what she gives to others is just 'no-

thing to nobody.' So, doubtless, her meditations are quite absorbed by calculations as to quantity and quality and cost, and there is no room for any other thought to intrude. Or if a vagrant idea *should* present itself, you may be sure it is only some such consideration as whom she will ask to her annual winter party, which 'comes off' in January; or she debates whether she has chosen for the best in declining to spend her Christmas with her banker's family at Richmond, and electing to dine in Russell Square with her lawyer and his fussy wife, and all their set of 'professional' people. To be sure, they always did things in very good style; still, she would certainly have preferred Richmond if it hadn't been that Rosa—the youngest girl—was such a pert little thing, and once, in her hearing, had called her—her, Miss Lumley—'a griffin!' She had half expected that the Favershams—Sir George and Lady Faversham—would have asked her to their festive gathering at their 'place' in Kent. But somehow they hadn't, and she was forced to fall back on her lawyer, who asked her every year, but to whom she only went as a *pis aller*—a fact of which that gentleman and his wife were perfectly aware. It would be dull enough, most likely; but then Christmas parties always were either dull or noisy—she was not sure if she didn't prefer the dullness to the 'racket' a parcel of young people were sure to make. At that very moment the family next door was an example of this reprehensible tendency to hilarity. The boys were home from Rugby; and they and their sisters and some 'young friends' were having an impromptu dance or something. Through the thin wall of partition she could hear, not only the pianoforte and the sound of quickly-moving feet, but snatches of merry talk and bursts of laughter. It was quite annoying. She wished she had quieter neighbours. Next door, on the other side, the family was quiet enough so far as merry-making was concerned, for one of them was seriously ill. But even that had its drawbacks, for the doc-

tor's carriage was continually rattling to and from the door, and Miss Lumley disliked *that* very much,—it reminded her of her father's and mother's last illness, and poor Clarissa's.

And so, perhaps, this is how she got into the perilous region of retrospection, and began to think of 'old times' as she leaned back in that admirably cushioned chair of hers. She was not accustomed to these kind of reveries. But the rigid face softens, and the grey eyes gleam less coldly and do not look nearly so like steel as usual while she muses this evening on 'the days that are no more.' She sees visions of the kind father and mother, the handsome sister who died, blithe but naughty little Hetta, who is on the other side of the world, and—perhaps, not least predominantly—the once devoted curate who is married, and lives equally out of her world, now. All pass before her mind's eye. These were once the foreground figures of her life, but they are all gone now. She has no one to control, contradict, or worry her; no one over whose welfare she is likely to feel the wearing pain of anxiety or the sharp anguish of apprehension. She is quite free and independent, and, as it seems, without a serious care in the world. Yet, does any one suppose that this is a happy woman?

Far from it. Most of those who know her believe her to be but a grim, discontented, gloomy-tempered person, equally uninteresting to other people as she would seem to be to herself. Nevertheless, she had the elements of better things in her.

Presently she rises from her seat, goes to her desk, and from it takes a packet of letters, apparently of various degrees of age, but all in the same handwriting. She selects the one last received. It is dated three years back, and is brief. It says—

'We feel quite sure that the money just received again comes from you, though you will never acknowledge it. Oh, sister Jane! why do you try to *seem* harder than you are? The help comes in a time of need, and I cannot but be deeply grateful for it; but if a word of love had come with it, how doubly precious it would

have been! Surely, surely my love might make *you* happier, even as yours would make me! But be it as you will. Only—my husband says, and I also, that we must not again be indebted to your charity, if you will not give us your love. We can—and will—do without the money, sister Jane. It is a word of sisterly fondness and sympathy that I am longing for in this far-away place. God bless you, I pray, and teach my children to pray, always.

‘HETTA.’

For two years Miss Lumley had left that letter unanswered, unnoticed. Then she had written—it may be remembered as a saving clause in the indictment against her—she *had* written. In some such rare moment as this present one of relenting from the usual constraint in which she carefully kept her inner life, she wrote to her sister—awkwardly and bluntly enough, yet with the awakening of the long-dormant impulses sufficiently evident to one who had the eye to see and heart to understand the poor dried-up, distorted, tightly-braced nature of its writer. And that letter was despatched a year ago. And a week ago it had come back to her across the seas, with the ominous words ‘Gone away’ scrawled across the worn, stained envelope.

‘Gone away!’ Was it indeed so? And was the last chance of something better to brighten and elevate this woman’s wasting life, gone away from her for ever? In self-defence against the growing pain of compunction, Jane Lumley tried to recall her old feeling of bitterness, not so much against her sister, as against the man who had taken her sister from her home, her family, her ‘position,’—for the miserable, worldly grievance *would* intrude even into such serious thoughts as these.

‘I never could like Charles Gray. I know we should never have got on together. Perhaps it’s as well as it is,’ she said to herself, and stubbornly held herself down to that creed, and would not let the regrets have way that were crowding on one another deep down in her heart.

And she rang the bell hastily for

candles, resolved to think no more of these things. Her face looks hard and grim as usual when the servant appears with lighted candles, and a note in her hand.

‘Please ma’am, a little boy brought this and is waiting down stairs.’

‘Some one from the carpet warehouse, I suppose,’ mutters Miss Lumley, while fumbling for her spectacles, and pulling one of the candles nearer to her, in order to read the missive.

But it is not from the carpet warehouse. It is dated from one of the poorest and most miserable of shabby London streets, and it simply says:—

‘Henrietta Gray is lying ill and in great poverty at this address. The doctor who is attending her sends this to Miss Lumley, as the only person in London whom he can discover to have any knowledge of his patient.’

The maid waits some minutes while her mistress reads this brief epistle. At last she ventures to ask, ‘Any answer, if you please ma’am?’

‘Bring me—give me—,’ says Miss Lumley, putting her hands out as if in the effort to catch hold of something. But the sound of her own voice appears to recall her scattered senses; and before the girl has time to be alarmed, she adds, clearly and peremptorily, ‘Send for a cab.’

‘Yes, ma’am. And is the boy to wait?’

‘Let the boy come—no; I’ll go down. Fetch me my bonnet. Stay—no; send the boy up to me.’

For when she rose from her chair she staggered weakly, and was compelled to sink back into it again.

‘But get—a cab—directly!’ she gasped out, after the retiring servant. And she could not stay still, even for the minute that must elapse before ‘the boy’ could come into her presence. She tottered to the door. She stood there waiting, and clenched her hands and ground her teeth together in impatience, while she heard the careful, well-taught maid impressing on the boy to ‘wipe his boots well, first.’

‘Come up! Never mind the stair carpets! Come up!’ she called out, shrilly. And when the messenger

appeared, she began her questions at once.

'Is she very ill? Has she been ill long? The lady—Mrs. Gray. Can't you speak? Don't you know anything about it?' For the boy's face looked strangely blank, and then was convulsively disturbed.

'She's been ill ever since we came to England,' he faltered, with a desperate effort to speak calmly; 'ever since my father died.'

'Your father?—dead! Who are you?' The passion in her withered face and harsh voice almost daunted the boy, old for his years as he seemed. She seized his arm, and drew him into the lighted drawing-room. 'What's your name?'

'George Lumley Gray. I'm the eldest. There's only me and little Charlie left now.'

'George Lumley!' It was her father's name that the poor exiled, disgraced daughter had given to her first-born. Inconceivably it smote the already stricken heart of the sister to hear and to see the vague likeness of pretty Hetta that lurked in the pale, troubled face of the boy. All the woman was called into life in Jane Lumley then. It might have been an everyday action with her, so readily and fondly did her arms twine round the little lad and draw him closely to her.

'You're my nephew,' she whispered: 'your mother's my own sister. God forgive me, and help us all!'

'Only think,' said our bright young matron to her husband two or three weeks after, 'how unjust I have been all along to poor Miss Lumley! Will I ever believe ill of any one again? Never; I declare it; unless on the most hideously un-mistakeable evidence.'

'Why, what's the matter, little one?' naturally followed the inquiry. 'What has your cross old lady been and done now?'

'Don't, please, don't remind me of

my past sins! I know I've called her names often enough, but I never shall again.'

'Oh! so she's only middle-aged now, then? I thought you couldn't be so cruel for long together. Has she given you that new drawing-room carpet?'

'Carpet! it's all nonsense about the carpet. I dare say she wasn't thinking about it at all, when I thought her mind was full of nothing else. She's been nursing her sister through a serious illness,—that's how she's spent her Christmas. I declare it puts me to shame.'

'My dear love! Happily your sisters are all well, and I haven't any, so I don't see how you could have emulated Miss Lumley's course of proceeding at this season.'

'It's only I'm so ashamed of my past ill thoughts of her,' cried the warmhearted little wife. 'But what does it matter? She has better things to make her happy than my good opinion; for she will have a real home, with plenty of love in it now. The Howard Street house is to be given up, and she's taken a cottage in Devonshire; and as soon as poor Mrs. Gray is sufficiently recovered, they all go down there together. She can't do enough for her widowed sister and her children, mamma says. And already she's taken her place with them all. Already she looks quite different from what she was. And we shall think of her always now, not as Miss Lumley, lonely, and cross, and selfish, and—'

'Old?' suggested the incorrigible husband.

'No. The old Miss Lumley is to be blotted out and forgotten. Now she is kind, loving, and loved "Aunt Jane." And I wish—oh, how I wish!—that all who are solitary, unloved, and unloving as she was three weeks ago, could but have such a gift as has been bestowed on her this Christmas!'

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